

# Smart Computing<sup>®</sup>

& CONSUMER ELECTRONICS

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In Plain English

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Device  
photos  
courtesy  
of Apple





"I received the CarMD from my son as a present last holiday season. Shortly thereafter as I was driving around town running errands on a lovely Saturday afternoon the dreaded "check engine" light lit up on my car. I plugged in the device and one of three possible causes was a loose gas cap . . . my problem was quickly resolved at zero cost. The device clearly paid for itself the very first time I used it."

— Jerry D., Irvine, CA

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## Check Car Problems Off Your List This Holiday!

CarMD Is Now For Both Mac & PC

Car problems don't care if you have an important business trip or family vacation planned. So what do you do when that dreaded "Check Engine" light comes on just hours before your big trip? Drive straight to the mechanic? Cancel your trip? Maybe it's just a loose gas cap. But what if it's something expensive that will take days to fix? Thanks to the revolutionary CarMD handheld device, now virtually everyone who owns a vehicle can quickly and easily solve automotive repair mysteries—right from home.

### How It Works

When your car's "Check Engine" light appears, or even before, plug the CarMD handheld device into your vehicle's Data Link Connector (DLC). The DLC is a small port found right under the dashboard on all 1996 and newer vehicles. It's the same place your mechanic plugs in his expensive diagnostic tools. Not sure where to look? Visit [www.CarMD.com](http://www.CarMD.com) to search by year, make and model.

In seconds, CarMD beeps to confirm the test is complete. Then the tool's built-in LEDs let you know how severe the problem is (green = OK, yellow =

possible problem, red = service required). A yellow light can even help you catch a hidden engine problem before you're miles into your next road trip.

To learn more about your car's problem, connect CarMD to your computer using the included software and USB cable. CarMD customers gain free access to an extensive online database ([www.carmd.com](http://www.carmd.com)) that helps diagnose the cause and estimate what repairs should cost down to fair parts and labor in your region. The reports can be used to help do-it-yourselfers with repairs, and give you a bargaining tool with your mechanic.

### Now For Mac

The CarMD® Vehicle Health System™ now includes Version 3.0 software for both Mac and PC use. In addition to working with Microsoft Windows® 2000, XP, Vista, and Win7, CarMD has been specially designed to run on a wide range of Apple® Mac operating systems. CarMD has also made substantial enhancements to its website ([www.CarMD.com](http://www.CarMD.com)), including helpful Vehicle Health Matters content and videos.

### Why Everyone Needs CarMD

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\* U.S. Patents: #6,687,584, #6,941,203, #6,947,816

## Smart Solutions Advertisement

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Check Car Problems Off Your List This Holiday!



## Editor's Note

The end of the year is always an exciting time for anyone contemplating computer-related purchases. If we haven't already seen the products that manufacturers touted in the first half of the year, we start seeing them now. (After all, no one wants to miss the holiday shopping season.)

The big news this season is the slate PC. Netbooks, which cut deeply into notebook sales in recent years, now find themselves facing new competition in the form of slim, touchscreen devices. Apple defined the slate category with its iPad, but traditional PC manufacturers (having teamed up with Google and Microsoft) are catching up in time for the holidays. The rush of new products makes for an exciting December, but this is just the beginning of the slate's story. We'll see plenty of excitement around the slate at CES (the annual Consumer Electronics Show) this January and we'll keep you up-to-date.

Of course, this issue of *Smart Computing* isn't all play and no work. This month, we focus on a topic that has a huge impact on the success of many small businesses: search engine optimization. If a major search engine has ever seemingly "forgotten" your business, you know just how critical those search results are when it comes to driving traffic to your site. Read on to learn what you should do (and what you should expect from) SEO.

Thanks for giving *Smart Computing* a spot on your coffee tables and in your offices this year. We look forward to sharing tips, tricks, and product news with you in the new year.

*Joshua B. Gulick*

Joshua Gulick



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## DESKTOPS &amp; LAPTOPS (PCs)

# Asus Turbocharges Its Latest Eee PC

The Asus Eee PC made an appearance in *Time* magazine's recent "All-Time 100 Gadgets" list, mostly because the device represented the market's first netbook. The netbook is now a mainstay in the computer world, with plenty of manufacturers filling store shelves with their own interpretations of the modern netbook. However, the Eee PC continues to evolve, and the latest iteration includes some interesting technology.

With its 10.1-inch backlit display and aerodynamic shell design, the Eee PC 1015PN (\$429; [usa.asus.com](http://usa.asus.com)) might take on every appearance of a netbook, but beneath its hood lies an impressive array of powerful mobile hardware. The device's Intel Atom N550 dual-core processor has a 1.5GHz clock speed and includes Intel's Hyper-Threading, SpeedStep, and thermal monitoring technologies.

The 1015PN also includes a discrete graphics processor, the Nvidia Ion. This graphics processor helps to bring the 1015PN a bit closer to the performance found in traditional laptops and even desktops, thanks to graphics performance that's over 10 times more powerful than integrated graphics. In fact, the Ion supports full 1080p video and can even handle demanding video and photo-editing applications. In 1015PN models that include Windows 7 Home Premium, you'll also find Nvidia's Optimus technology, which intelligently switches between integrated and discrete graphics, depending on



The Asus Eee PC 1015PN looks the part of netbook, but under its hood are a processor and discrete graphics that can let you do far more than what's typically associated with a netbook.

the application, to help extend battery life whenever possible.

The emphasis on extended battery life doesn't end with Optimus. Asus' exclusive Super Hybrid Engine technology contributes to the 1015PN's 10-hour battery life by adapting and adjusting power settings that help to deliver the right CPU performance for whatever application(s) you're using. Along with this 10-hour battery, the 1015PN includes 1GHz of RAM, a 250GB hard drive, a 0.3MP (megapixel) camera, three USB 2.0

ports, one HDMI (High-Definition Multimedia Interface) port, a memory card reader, integrated Wi-Fi and Bluetooth, and headphone/microphone jacks.

Like other Eee PCs, the 1015PN includes Asus' Eee Docking platform, which provides easy access to commonly used functions on the netbook. This platform has four hubs that bring together streaming, downloading, sharing, and utility applications that you can launch with just a couple of clicks. ■

## STORAGE

### Western Digital Breaks The 3TB SATA Barrier

**Y**our PC is brimming with storage-gobbling video and music files, along with applications and other content that eventually leave your hard drive(s) begging for relief. If this is an accurate description of your storage situation, Western Digital has a solution that can ease your capacity woes.

The latest addition to the company's Caviar Green family of SATA (Serial Advanced Technology Attachment) hard drives is a 3TB (terabyte) model (\$239; [www.westerndigital.com](http://www.westerndigital.com)) that has a 750GB-per-platter areal density and Advanced Format technology that helps increase media format efficiency. This drive also features WD GreenPower technology, which reduces power consumption, increases reliability thanks to lower operating temperatures, and decreases acoustical operating noise.

Although it might be tempting to drop this drive into your PC and immediately reap the benefits of its massive secondary storage, be aware that 32-bit versions of Windows will recognize

a maximum of only 2.19TB of storage per drive, and even the 64-bit versions will need a motherboard that uses a specific type of BIOS (Basic Input/Output System). The good news is that Western Digital is bundling an AHCI (Advanced Host Controller Interface)-compliant host bus adapter with the drive. The adapter will let you use this Caviar Green model as a boot or

secondary drive in 64-bit versions of Windows Vista and Windows 7, or as a secondary drive in the 32-bit versions of those operating systems. Earlier Windows versions aren't supported. ■



Your eyes don't deceive you: This is the first 3TB SATA hard drive, but you'll need to use some special included hardware with this Western Digital drive to get around the storage capacity limits in Windows.

## DISPLAYS

### This LCD's Thin In Stature, Thick In Features

**W**hile even the thickest of LCD monitors are usually relatively thin, it doesn't hurt to consider super-slim models if you're in the market for an upgrade. If you are, the new MultiSync EX series from NEC might fill the bill.

Kicking off this series is the 23-inch EX231W (\$339; [www.necdisplay.com](http://www.necdisplay.com)), a full HD (high-definition) eco-friendly monitor designed primarily for business environments. As with other monitors in the EX series, the EX231W features what the company calls a "minimalist" design, complete with an ultra-thin (in both width and depth) bezel. Despite this slim design, the monitor's quick-release stand nonetheless can pivot, tilt, and swivel, and the display height is also adjustable.

The EX231W has an ECO Mode that lets you quickly select one of two preset brightness settings, including an Energy Star setting that works to save power. Also onboard are human and ambient light sensors that adjust the display's brightness to mesh with your current work conditions. These sensors can also detect when the ambient light

drops below a certain value (such as when you turn off your office lights) and automatically enter a power-saving mode. ■



When you're done with your work day, the ambient light sensors in the NEC EX231W LCD monitor can automatically detect that you've turned off the lights and enter a power-saving mode.

## PRINTERS & PERIPHERALS

### Lexmark Genesis: Looks Fast, Is Fast

**B**uilding on the inkjet platform it released last year to cater to wireless Web-connected workplaces, Lexmark has announced a new AIO (all-in-one) printer that blends cutting-edge technology with wild looks.

The Lexmark Genesis (\$399.99; [www.lexmark.com](http://www.lexmark.com)) looks nothing like your run-of-the-mill inkjet AIO. The printer sits upright, helping push the focus to its integrated 4.3-inch capacitive touchscreen. But as stylish as it is, the Genesis delivers a wealth of productivity-enhancing features that work to save time in busy work environments.

The printer's Flash Scan technology uses a 10MP imaging sensor to provide an instant preview on the color touchscreen and transfer a scanned page from "document to digital" in as few as three seconds. Because the printer can be connected to the Web, the touchscreen can also display news updates, access photo-sharing sites, or even show the weather forecast.

The Genesis has built-in 802.11n wireless and a two-step wireless setup process that can get you up and running with little hassle. This printer is also no slouch in the speed

department, with black-and-white print speeds up to 33ppm (pages per minute) and color speeds of 30ppm. **I**



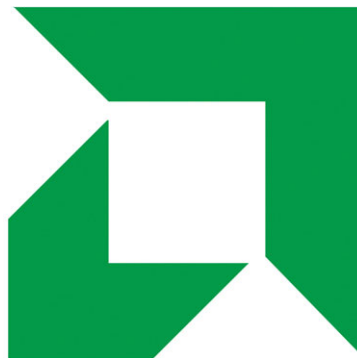
The face-up Lexmark Genesis all-in-one printer can streamline busy office environments with a 10MP imaging sensor that delivers instant previews and turns scanned documents into digital files in as few as three seconds.

## CPU S, CHIPS & CARDS

### Bobcat Set To Growl With One Watt

**I**f you thought the floor for power consumption in processors couldn't get any lower, then you probably haven't heard of the AMD Bobcat ([www.amd.com](http://www.amd.com)). This upcoming chip doesn't need 10 watts or even 5 watts of power to operate—instead, the Bobcat will require less than 1 watt of power.

Slated for use in ultramobile PCs and handheld devices, the Bobcat won't be severely handicapped in the performance department to accommodate those lower power requirements. The chip is expected to deliver about 90% of the performance of higher-power notebook chips, all while consuming about half of the space required by those other processors.



Further, the diminutive Bobcat will integrate a host of modern processor technologies, such as SIMD (Single Instruction, Multiple Data) extensions (SSE, SSE2, SSE3, SSSE3, and SSE4A), a 64-bit integer unit, dual x86 instruction decoding, advanced branch predictor, secure virtualization, full out-of-order instruction and load/store engines, and more. The Bobcat's low-power design features a microarchitecture that minimizes data movement and unnecessary reads. This design also includes clock gating, power gating, and system low power states.

The end result should be a processor that results in snappier mobile devices with even better battery performance. The Bobcat will begin appearing in devices next year. **I**

### Here Comes The Boxee Box

**A**fter a nearly year-long wait, media enthusiasts finally can get their hands on one of the most highly anticipated media players to date. D-Link's Boxee Box joins a crowded market of players, but the company hopes that its device will stand apart with its custom software interface and ability to accommodate just about every type of media format.

D-Link initially announced that the Boxee Box (\$199.99; [www.dlink.com](http://www.dlink.com)) would use Nvidia's Tegra 2 processor, but the company switched gears and is now using Intel's CE4100 system-on-a-chip to power the player. On the software side, the device is based around Boxee, a popular, free media center application that's been on the market for several years. Whereas many other

media players use proprietary software that can be hit or miss, Boxee remains popular due to its intuitive organizational and downloading abilities.

Along with delivering access to all of the video, music, and pictures on your network (via Ethernet or the player's built-in 802.11n wireless), the Boxee Box also provides access to nearly 40,000 TV episodes, free and premium movie selections, and a bevy of other content available on the Web. To navigate that content and enjoy a more complete Internet experience, the included remote features two faces—one with a navigation pad and another with a full QWERTY keyboard. ■



The D-Link Boxee Box has finally arrived and will fit right into your home entertainment system with a huge selection of media content and the hardware and software to easily navigate it.

## PROBLEM-SOLVER: TROUBLESHOOTING THE NEWS

### **After installing a video card, my computer continues to use on-board video.**

If your monitor works only when plugging it into the onboard video port on your computer (rather than the discrete video card port), enter your PC's BIOS and disable the onboard video. If this option isn't available or if this step doesn't fix the problem, right-click the onboard display adapter in the Windows Device Manager and click Uninstall. Follow the prompts to complete the process.

### **I installed an old IDE (Integrated Drive Electronics) hard drive in my newer system, but I'm unable to access it.**

If you are trying to install the hard drive as a secondary drive to access the information on it, make sure the drive is the only device on the IDE

cable. Also, set the jumpers on the drive for the Single Drive or Master setting, rather than Slave.

### **PDF (Portable Document Format) files take much longer to print than other files on my printer.**

Before printing PDF files, try lowering the resolution on your printer. Printer settings depend on software that comes with the printer, so our instructions may not match your printer's settings. That said, they should be close. Open the Devices And Printers control panel and double-click your printer icon. Click Printer and Printing Preferences to open the printer's preferences. Click the Print Quality tab (or similar) and choose a lower resolution (than the displayed resolution) from the Resolution drop-down menu. Click OK. Remember

to return the resolution to its previous setting before printing other document or image types.

### **Windows is displaying blue error screens that indicate that the computer is reverting to a slower DRAM (dynamic RAM) speed.**

These types of errors can indicate a problem with your computer's RAM. Launch the Windows Memory Diagnostic by clicking Start, typing **memory** in the Search Programs And Files box, and pressing ENTER. Choose the first option to restart your computer and let the program check for memory problems. If any of the tests fail, you'll likely need to replace your faulty memory. If you have more than one RAM module, make sure you perform the test with each module installed alone to isolate potential problems.

# Enhance & Share Your Holiday Memories With Roxio Creator 2011

## Create 3D Videos, Slideshows, Cards & More

The holidays are here, and as the family's unofficial photographer, you'll be snapping pics, filming important moments, and maybe even putting on a slideshow at this year's family get-together. You have your trusty camera and an HD (high-definition) camcorder, but your software is a little dated. It's a great time to pick up Roxio Creator (www.roxio.com) so you can make those videos and that slideshow really pop.

### Roxio Creator

Whatever your digital project, Roxio Creator (\$99.99) can help you make it a success. A noteworthy new feature is support for 3D photo and video. With Roxio Creator, you can create 3D movies from your 2D or 3D video. You can also create 3D images from your 2D photos. Roxio Creator includes 3D glasses so you can view the images and video in 3D on your PC monitor or your TV.

The family videographer will enjoy one of the most important new tools to come to video software: an image stabilization feature that makes shaky footage look as though the camera was placed on a tripod. If you often make jokes about not having a surgeon's hands, this feature alone is worth the price of Roxio Creator.

Roxio Creator also has features that let you create stunning greeting cards in minutes. Combine your photos with Roxio's power tools to make a holiday greeting card that will impress friends and family.



### Roxio Creator Pro

The most notable of Creator Pro's (\$129.99) extra features is support for BD (Blu-ray Disc) authoring. With this tool, you can burn your HD videos to BDs, preserving your memories without sacrificing crisp, clear image quality.

Of course, there's more to Creator Pro than the Blu-ray plug-in. For just \$30 more than Roxio Creator 2011, you get everything in Creator, as well as five applications (including the Blu-ray plug-in) worth \$250 in value.

**Roxio BackOnTrack.** This software provides a layer of protection for your PC's data and restores Windows in the event of a system crash. If you have documents, music, photos, and videos that you can't afford to lose, this is a must-have.

**Roxio Secure Burn.** Encrypting the data that you burn to disc is a snap with this powerful app. Simply drag and drop files to protected copies to disc.

**BIAS SoundSoap SE.** Anyone who wishes he could remove background noise from recordings will love BIAS SoundSoap. The software easily pulls unwanted sounds from your audio files.

**SmartSound Sonicfire Pro.** Jazz up your slideshow this year with music tracks. The software's "Mood Mapping" can match audio to the photos in your slideshow.

### Put Roxio Under The Tree

Roxio Creator also makes the kind of gift that inspires creativity. If a family member is a fellow shutterbug or has a digital music collection, you have already found the perfect present to put under the tree this year. Unlike so many gifts, Roxio Creator is one that your recipient will enjoy all year long. ■

## New Palm Owner Unleashes New Palm Tech

**W**ith all the recent attention heaped on Google's Android and Apple's iOS, it's understandably easy to forget about one of the pioneers in the mobile market: Palm. But this mobile OS (operating system)—now called webOS—is indeed still kicking around, and its latest version is set to be showcased in the Palm Pre 2 smartphone.

Although it was only 2009, it seems like eons since the original Palm Pre launched. Since then, the Motorola Droid, Apple iPhone 4, and other high-profile devices have garnered the bulk of the smartphone headlines. However, another big change occurred that should help reshape the future of the Pre and its OS: HP acquired Palm in April 2010.

The original Palm Pre and its OS straddled the usability line between work and play through a multipronged focus on multimedia and messaging. That tradition continues with “features that make the webOS great for consumers, enterprises, and developers,” says Jon Rubenstein, senior vice president and general manager of HP's Palm Global Business Unit.

WebOS 2.0 introduces what HP calls “true multitasking,” as users are able to pause a game and perform a bevy of functions (such as tapping an email notification, reading a restaurant review, and checking the calendar) before returning to the game. The OS also lets users manage



If you want to start typing without first opening an app, you can do just that on the upcoming Palm Pre 2, which lets you start an email, create a social networking update, or conduct a search by simply typing.

multiple open applications and notifications using touch gestures, and the system's Stacks concept groups together related open apps so that

users can open similar items easily and without hassle.

Also new is the ability to type anything—an email message, social networking update, or a search string—even before opening an app. With WebOS 2.0's Just Type technology, you don't need to wait for an app to launch before typing, which can help you get your ideas or thoughts down as quickly as possible. The new OS also delivers new messages, event reminders, and other notifications at the bottom of the screen and lets users respond to or ignore them with just one touch.

The 5.1-ounce Palm Pre 2 delivers these features through a 3.1-inch multitouch screen with a 320 x 480 HVGA (half-size Video Graphics Array) display and a slide-out physical QWERTY keyboard. The device has a 1GHz processor, 16GB of memory, built-in GPS (global positioning system), a 5MP camera with LED (light-emitting diode) flash, geotagging, and video capture. It also includes an accelerometer, integrated Wi-Fi and Bluetooth, and a battery life of 5.5 hours of talk time and 350 hours of standby time.

In October, HP announced that the Palm Pre 2 and the webOS 2.0 update will be available “in the coming months.” The phone will be available through Verizon Wireless, and early price estimates are hovering around \$140 for the phone with a contract. ■

### DULY QUOTED

“I don't think it matters that the flat only exists in Facebook. It is real to me, and I have suffered a real loss.”

—Paola Letizia discusses the burglary of her virtual home in “Pet Society,” a social pet simulation game. The hacker stole everything from virtual furniture and clothes to virtual paintings—all totaling roughly \$140 in real money—but left Letizia's blue-colored virtual cat.

Source: MSNBC.com

# News From The Help Desk

## Our Most Common Tech Calls

COMPILED BY CHAD DENTON

*Each month, we receive numerous technical support calls and email messages. Some computer problems are fairly common, and we find that many callers struggle to resolve the same issues. In this article, we cover some of the most common or timely tech support questions and provide our solution for each of them.*

**Q I recently upgraded to a laptop with Windows 7. Occasionally, when typing in a document, the cursor jumps around, and I end up inadvertently typing elsewhere in the document. What can I do to stop this?**

**A** Most likely, your fingers are grazing your notebook's touchpad. When this happens, the cursor jumps to the location of your pointer. Many touchpad drivers have a setting that temporarily deactivates the touchpad when you type. Enabling this feature should help solve the problem.

On most systems, you can access your touchpad's settings by right-clicking the touchpad icon in the Windows System Tray and click Properties. Depending on your system, you may also find your touchpad's settings available in the Start menu. You'll have to look through the settings to find the appropriate option, as the exact location and wording will vary depending on the driver. If you don't see an appropriate option, you can check with your system manufacturer to see if an updated driver is available.

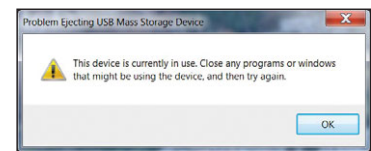
If you can't find an option to temporarily disable the touchpad when you type, you might be able to find a "Touch To Click" option. Disabling this option should fix the problem, but you'll no longer be able to tap your touchpad to left-click. You'll have to use the mouse buttons above or below your touchpad instead.

**Q When I try to eject my thumb drive by clicking the Safely Remove Hardware icon in the Windows System Tray, I get a message that says the device is currently in use. How can I safely remove my thumb drive?**

**A** It's always a good idea to "eject" any removable media before physically removing it. By "ejecting" the media before physically removing it, you're telling Windows not to access the drive and avoiding the risk of accidentally corrupting data. You generally eject media by right-clicking the Safely Remove Hardware And Eject Media icon in the Windows System Tray and clicking Eject. Usually, you receive a message saying it's safe to

remove your media, but occasionally, you get a message stating that the device is in use and cannot be stopped. This usually happens when another program is accessing your thumb drive. In order to safely remove it, you need to shut down the application or process that is accessing the thumb drive.

If you see this message after clicking the Safely Remove Hardware icon, it's likely that another program is accessing your thumb drive (or other device). In order to safely remove it, you need to shut down the application or process that is accessing the device.



Start by making sure that no files or folders on the thumb drive are being displayed on the PC and close any that you find. For instance, you won't be able to eject the thumb drive if you have a Word document or picture file open on your system. If the drive is still busy, close all open applications. Some applications may create temporary or backup files and store them on your thumb drive. Just closing the file may not be enough to remove the backup file; you may have to close the application itself.

If you're still having problems, make sure that you don't have any software that is scanning the drive. Antivirus or anti-malware applications, for instance, may scan removable drives, and any removable drive will not be able to be removed while the scan is being conducted. Finally, you can always shut down the computer. The danger of data corruption comes when you suddenly remove the media while it's being accessed. By shutting down the computer, you're closing down all your applications, including any application that's accessing your thumb drive. This graceful shutdown should prevent any data damage. Once the computer has shut down, you can remove the media from the system.

**Q When I start my computer, I hear a series of beeps, and Windows refuses to load. How can I fix my computer?**

**A** When you first start your computer, it performs a quick hardware check. If a component isn't functioning correctly, your computer will make a series of beeps.

Unfortunately, beep codes aren't standardized, so you'll need to check your system manual to determine what these codes mean. If you don't have a hard copy of the manual, you'll need to use a working computer to access your manufacturer's Web site where you should be able to find an online version of the user guide. The test can catch a broad range of problems. In some instances, you may need to simply remove or replace RAM. In other cases, you may need a new motherboard or processor.

**Q I have a computer with two SATA (Serial Advanced Technology Attachment) drives. One drive contains Windows XP, and I want to add Win7 to the second drive. Will I still be able to boot into WinXP with this setup? Is there anything else I should be concerned with?**

**A** In order to dual boot between operating systems, you generally need two physical hard drives or one physical hard drive partitioned into multiple virtual drives. In this setup, there's already two separate drives (whether they are physical drives or virtual drives), so you're halfway there.

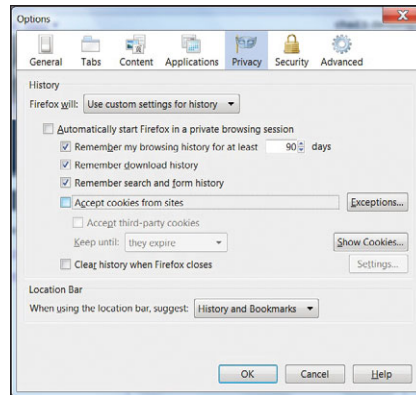
If dual booting between different versions of Windows, always install the newest OS (operating system) first. The newer version of Windows will scan the system for older versions and set up a boot loader that will let you choose which version you want to boot at startup.

One note of caution: It's generally a good idea to reformat the hard drive on which you'll install Windows. This will erase any existing data, so make sure you back up any data on the drive.

**Q When I try to save a file from Gmail to My Documents, I get an error message saying I need to activate cookies. What does this mean, and how I do activate cookies?**

**A** Cookies are very small files that can be used to store a variety of information. For instance, Gmail cookies may contain session information that Gmail can use to automatically log you in the next time you visit from the same PC. Although cookies generally make life online easier, they can also be used, mainly by online marketers, to track your Internet habits.

If you decide you want to enable cookies, you'll need to do so in whatever browser you're using. In Internet Explorer, cookies are controlled by Internet Explorer's Privacy Settings. Click Tools, open Internet Options, and click the Privacy tab. If you don't want to adjust all your Privacy settings, click Advanced and place a check next to Override Automatic Cookie Handling. Select Accept under First Party Cookies. You may wish to select Block under Third Party Cookies (this is a good way to prevent online marketers from monitoring you too closely). Finally, you can place a check next to Always Allow



To enable cookies in Firefox, click Privacy in the Options menu. In the drop-down menu at the top of the screen, select Use Custom Settings For History and make sure there's a check next to Accept Cookies From Sites.

Session Cookies if you want to allow cookies that automatically log you in to sites.

In Firefox, Click Options in the Tools menu and click Privacy. In the drop-down menu under History, select Use Custom Settings For History. Make sure there's a check next to Accept Cookies From Sites. If you want, you can remove the check next to Accept Third-Party Cookies.

Finally, in Google Chrome, click the wrench icon and select Options. Click the Under The Hood Tab and then click the Content Settings button. Make sure to select Allow Local Data To Be Set. Again, you can select Block All Third-Party Cookies Without Exception to block third-party cookies. **I**

## Feature Package Topics

Each Smart Computing issue includes tips, reviews, and information about a variety of topics. However, each issue also has a featured group of articles about a selected topic. Below is a list of the Feature Packages from the previous year. As a Smart Computing subscriber, you have access to all of our archived articles at [www.smartcomputing.com](http://www.smartcomputing.com).

<b>November 2009:</b>	Meet Windows 7
<b>December 2009:</b>	Holiday Gift Guide
<b>January 2010:</b>	The Single PC Home
<b>February 2010:</b>	Upgrade Your Notebook
<b>March 2010:</b>	Troubleshoot Windows 7
<b>April 2010:</b>	Clean Your Computer
<b>May 2010:</b>	Solve PC Errors
<b>June 2010:</b>	Troubleshoot Your Network
<b>July 2010:</b>	Give Windows A Tune-Up
<b>August 2010:</b>	Recover Lost Files
<b>September 2010:</b>	First Aid For Your Gadgets
<b>October 2010:</b>	Do More With Your Network
<b>November 2010:</b>	41 Windows Tips & Tricks

## A Touchpad Alternative

# Swiftpoint Mouse

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Swiftpoint Mouse  
 \$69.99

Swiftpoint  
[support@swiftpoint.net](mailto:support@swiftpoint.net)  
[www.futuremouse.com](http://www.futuremouse.com)

Using a touchpad to control a laptop for any length of time is as tedious as drawing a portrait with an Etch A Sketch. There are an endless number of tiny movements that only get you a fraction of the way across the screen, and the whole time you're thinking that there has to be a better way to do this. I habitually balance my notebook on my lap, so using the touchpad is especially cramped. If you're currently trying to work out that laptop cramp in your hand, too, take a look at the Swiftpoint mouse. It's a small, portable, uniquely designed mouse built specifically for use with a laptop computer, and in my experience, it really beats using a touchpad.

The Swiftpoint mouse isn't just a mini mouse. Instead of curving your palm over it as you would a traditional mouse, you hold the Swiftpoint mouse more like a pencil. Your middle finger and thumb grip the mouse while your index finger rests on the raised middle portion (where the left- and right-click buttons are located). Altogether, the well-thought-out design made it comfortable to grip the mouse lightly and to use it for even long periods of time. Lefties are out of luck, unfortunately. This model is specifically designed for right-handed users.

The idea is that you'll use the Swiftpoint mouse in place of a touchpad, and unlike other mice, this model is small enough to use on the bottom portion of your laptop's keyboard area so you don't need to look for a hard, even surface on which to use your mouse. I found using the Swiftpoint mouse on the relatively large space available below my notebook's keyboard to be much less cramped (and cramp-inducing) than using the built-in touchpad.

The mouse is plug-and-play, so there's no software to install. It communicates with your computer via an unobtrusive thumb-nail-sized USB receiver, which also serves as a charging dock. A moderately strong magnet holds the mouse and USB receiver together when the mouse is docked. Theoretically, you could transport the mouse in this way, but it came loose with some bumping, so I found myself stowing it in my pocket while on the go. The handy Rapid-Charge feature provides a full hour of battery life with the first 30 seconds of charging. Dock it for 90 minutes, and you'll have two to four weeks of juice.

Besides the left- and right-click buttons, the Swiftpoint mouse also has a scroll wheel. You can use your index finger to control it as you would a typical scroll wheel, or you can tip the mouse to the right and roll the wheel across the tabletop, etc. It's a simple and intuitive way to move through long Web pages or documents.

The mouse also includes a "parking accessory" that you stick to the mousing area of your laptop's keyboard. When you place the mouse in the parking space, it's held in place magnetically. So it stays put even if your laptop is angled. A couple of other customizable extras make this mouse easier to use. The first is changing the "up" direction. If it's most comfortable for you to hold the mouse slightly sideways, you might find that your pointer moves to the side when you expect it to move upward. You can fiddle with this setting by holding down both mouse buttons and then moving the mouse in the "real" upward motion. The second feature is the SmartTouch sensor, which, when turned on, detects if your middle finger is on the mouse. If it isn't, your cursor won't move even if your mouse does. This could be handy if, for example, you're typing and want to be able to move your mouse without whipping the pointer all over the screen.

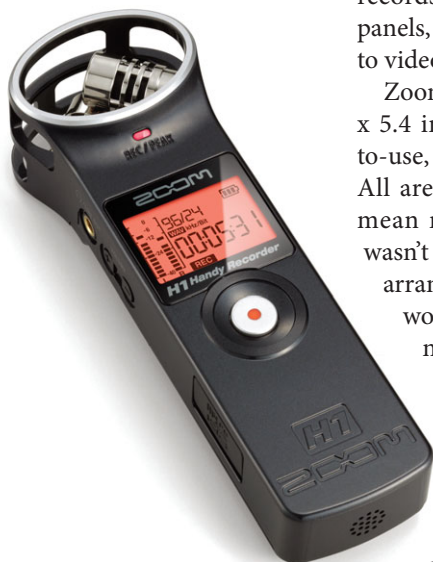
You won't find extras such as Forward and Back buttons, but this tiny pointer has the basics that most laptop users are looking for. Someone with especially large hands might disagree, but I found the Swiftpoint mouse to be comfortable and easy to use. And it's a welcome change from that pesky touchpad. ■

## H1 Handy Recorder

# Zoom Presses The Right Buttons

Blaine Flamig

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H1 Handy Recorder  
\$99  
Zoom  
(631) 784-2200  
www.samsontech.com

It wasn't until recently that the notion of buying a digital audio recorder offering respectable audio quality and a decent tool set for less than \$100 wasn't laughable. With its H1 Handy Recorder, Zoom has taken the chuckle out of that reasoning. Zoom has also removed the stiff learning curve many digital audio recorders carry with them. Combine the H1's travel-friendly candy bar design with the stellar audio quality offered at a more-than-fair price and the H1 is a great companion for anyone who regularly records meetings, conference and seminar panels, company podcasts, and audio to add to video.

Zoom says the H1 is its smallest (1.2 x 1.7 x 5.4 inches [HxWxD]; 2 ounces), easiest-to-use, and most affordable recorder to date. All are appealing traits, but they wouldn't mean much if the H1's recording quality wasn't up to snuff. Two onboard stereo mics arranged in an X/Y pattern eliminate such worries. The recordings I created in numerous indoor and outdoor settings featured predominantly clean, distortion-free audio that resonated with clear, strong volume.

Zoom protects the H1's mics by surrounding them in a partially exposed, three-layer circular cage.

The cage, like the rest of the H1's frame, is constructed of plastic, which undoubtedly helps keep the H1's price below \$100 and should stand up under normal usage. It's not inconceivable, however, that the plastic could take on a crack or damage due to a nasty drop or if left unprotected in a notebook bag.

Staying on the H1's physical attributes, the recorder's ease of use comes thanks to scads of buttons on the left, right, and back sides and an appreciatively oversized Record button that's front and center. A small LCD shows you the mic input level, battery life, recording format and quality, and other settings. Configuring these settings is almost an entirely button-driven process, and for anyone who has operated a recorder that

required digging through countless menus, this is a welcomed touch. Better, Zoom's button implementation doesn't look obnoxious or feel burdensome. If there is a fault, it's that the buttons are tiny, slightly inset into the frame, and don't give much tactile evidence you've successfully pressed one.

The back-located buttons include Lo Cut, Auto Level, and Rec Format sliders that engage the low-cut filter (to cut background noise), set the automatic mic input level, and switch between WAV and MP3 recording formats, respectively. Changing the quality of WAV (96KHz/48KHz/44.1KHz) or MP3 (16/24-bit at 48Kbps to 320Kbps) recordings requires using the Forward and Backward buttons. Also on the right side is an Input Level rocker to manually set the mic input level (0 to 100), mini USB, Power/Hold slider, and 1/8-inch microphone/line-in jack.

On its left side, the H1 sports a 1/8-inch headphone/line-out jack, volume rocker, and microSD/SDHC [Secure Digital High Capacity] slot (2GB card included; up to 32GB cards accepted for up to 50 hours of recording). At the bottom is a tiny but capable built-in speaker, and at the back you'll find a tripod mount to attach the H1 to a digicam or camcorder. The mount, however, is also plastic and appears as if it could crack or strip if wound too tightly.

As mentioned, learning the H1's ins and outs is mostly a nonissue. If you've used a digital audio recorder before, a quick read-through of the quick start guide will help you set the time and date, use track markers, and select the recording quality, which is about everything you need to jump right in. What takes more time and experimentation is determining when to bypass automatic mic input in favor of manual tweaks and where to best position the mic during recordings. Further, it didn't take long to realize that adding a wind screen for outdoor recordings was a must. Zoom sells a package that includes a screen, along with USB cable, AC adapter, adjustable tripod stand, mic clip, and carrying pouch for \$24. ■

## Interactive Storage

# Hitachi LifeStudio Desk Plus

Linné Vavrina

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linne@smartcomputing.com



LifeStudio Desk Plus  
\$149.99 (1TB)  
\$219.99 (2TB)  
Hitachi  
(800) 448-2244  
www.hitachi.us

This year has been one for the books. I attended eight weddings (nine including my own), took a fabulous weeklong trip to Jamaica, and moved twice. With so much happening, it's hard to recall all the details of each special occasion. Luckily, being the shutterbug that I am, I will always have my digital memories to remind me.

However, take a year packed with special memories, plus a photo-happy gal like myself, and what do you get? A hard drive full of unorganized photos, videos, and documents. I really need to offload some of my photos and videos to another form of storage, not only to regain some hard drive space but also to make sure my precious collection is safe in case my computer decides to crash on me. So, this month, I tested an external desktop drive, the Hitachi LifeStudio Desk Plus. As far as external drives go, there's not usually much to get excited about. But Hitachi's LifeStudio line offers some nifty features that spice up the way you store and organize your digital data.

To start, simply plug the LifeStudio drive into an outlet and then connect the included USB cord from the drive to an open USB port on your computer. Once you install the LifeStudio software, it automatically collects and organizes all your photos, videos, music, and documents into one streamlined interface. You can view and search for your digital content on a slick 3D wall powered by Cooliris. (It's similar to iTunes' Cover Flow, except your files are displayed on an angled "wall" up to seven rows wide.) Along the left sidebar, you'll find Channels, which arrange your content into organized sections and folders.

You'll find all the content on your computer under the MyLife channel. The photos, videos, and documents are automatically organized chronologically, while the music files are organized by albums and artists. Using the 3D wall, you are able to scroll through hundreds of photos and videos in seconds. As you scroll, you can select images to zoom in and out or view them in slideshow mode. At the bottom of each image are Facebook, Flickr, and Picasa buttons that let you directly

upload photos to those sites; the MySocial channel is where you can view all your photos from the three photo-sharing sites.

LifeStudio also pulls content in from the Web and organizes it into other channels, including Television, Movies, Music, News, Fun And Games, and Shopping, so you can watch TV clips and episodes (albeit with a nice dose of ads), music videos, and movies (full movies, clips, and trailers); check out the shopping deals of the day; play games; and read recent headlines and articles all in one spot.

The drive includes a built-in backup feature that lets you select folders and files to back up locally (to the LifeStudio drive), or you can sign up to receive 3GB of free online storage (upgrade to 250GB for \$49 per year). By default, backups run every 30 minutes, but you can configure a daily backup schedule.

The LifeStudio Desk Plus integrates a 4GB thumb drive (called MyKey) that attaches to the front of the external drive and automatically syncs with the LifeStudio software—handy for those on-the-go times when you need to quickly and easily take a file with you. When you attach the thumb drive to the external drive, MyKey Information tells you how much free space you have left on the thumb drive, and Sync Preferences lets you configure which files and folders you want to sync.

One small annoyance is that the LifeStudio Desk Plus does not come with a users manual. For a device with so many cool features and such an interactive interface, some instructions are always helpful.

LifeStudio Desk Plus is offered in 1TB (terabyte) and 2TB capacities, and other drives in the LifeStudio family include LifeStudio Desk (a desktop drive with no USB key), Mobile (a portable drive with no USB key), and Mobile Plus (a portable drive plus the USB key).

In my testing, I became somewhat addicted to the 3D wall and found myself scrolling just to see it fly across my screen. The LifeStudio Desk Plus drive helped me clean up my digital mess, and it turned the dull storage and backup process into an experience that's actually quite enjoyable. ■

## Shift Into High Gear

# Why Today's Drives Run Faster With Windows 7

Marty Sems

Send your comments to  
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## Windows® 7

Windows 7  
\$119.99 and up  
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(877) 696-7786  
www.microsoft.com

**B**ack in the days of Windows Vista, users—including me—made much of the fact that in many cases, it didn't feel as fast as Windows XP on the same hardware. This became a sore spot keeping many WinXP users from paying for an "upgrade" that would slow down their systems.

Not all of Vista's problems were entirely Microsoft's fault, however, and the performance situation improved with better third-party drivers, as well as faster hardware sold in mainstream PCs. Still, the troubled OS (operating system) didn't exactly win over WinXP users in droves. "It's not as bad as it used to be" isn't really what advertisers call a compelling call to action.

Today, nearly all of my Windows machines run Windows 7. Why, you may ask, is this the case? Isn't Win7 simply Vista warmed over? (This isn't entirely untrue. Win7, for all its new powers and capabilities, is Vista at heart. Skeptics describe it as Vista minus most of Vista's annoyances; others prefer to think of Win7 as Vista done right.) Put succinctly, I run Win7 for the speed. Mind you, I'm not saying that it could outrun WinXP on my old single-core, Pentium M laptop with a hard drive.

What I'm saying is that Win7 helps *today's* hardware perform better. More specifically, I'm talking about today's storage devices, which, as I've mentioned before, are a critical part of the speed equation. An average PC with a fast SSD (solid-state drive) can often feel peppier than a high-end gaming system with a slow hard drive.

Speaking of SSDs, you may have heard about the TRIM command, which Win7 uses to automatically keep compatible SSDs from slowing down over time. TRIM works in the background to erase the memory cells of deleted data, and move "good" data out of partially written blocks, so that these house-keeping operations don't get in the way the next time the OS has to write a file to the SSD. WinXP/Vista users can manually run a

"garbage collection" utility to restore SSD performance in essentially the same way; that is, if the drive manufacturer has made such a utility available for download.

Win7 and Vista accommodate SSDs in other ways, too. An SSD formatted with Win7/Vista will outperform one formatted under WinXP because the newer OSes will correctly align the drive's partitions with its physical sectors (data storage units), avoiding a time-wasting data storage condition loosely similar to fragmentation in a hard drive.

Even hard drives have evolved beyond WinXP. I recommend Win7 for its support of Advanced Format drives. Advanced Format is one of the reasons manufacturers such as Western Digital can create reliable hard drives much bigger than 2TB. These drives use sectors 4KB in size, eight times bigger than the 512-byte sectors used for the past five decades. (Current Advanced Format drives actually trick the OS into thinking that they use 512-byte sectors instead of 4KB ones through emulation.)

An Advanced Format hard drive is much better at error correction than a traditional drive and even provides more usable storage space. Furthermore, it may write data faster under Win7/Vista than under WinXP. Using an Advanced Format drive with WinXP may require a jumper setting change and/or a drive sector alignment utility from the drive manufacturer to avoid a slowdown.

Put another way, you can run SSDs and Advanced Format drives on a WinXP system, if you like, but it won't be as easy to make them perform up to their potential. Win7, on the other hand, easily uncorks the extra speed on tap. It's kind of like the extra top gears on today's six-speed manual and five-speed automatic transmissions.

Add in Win7's faster bootup process, especially when it's booting from an SSD, and it has become harder than ever to remain a WinXP holdout. ■

## Roundup: Mobile Operating Systems

# Android, BlackBerry, iOS & Windows Phone 7

In just a few short years, smartphones have become a must-have for both consumers and business professionals. The key to a smartphone's functionality is its mobile OS (operating system). Here, we check out Google's Android, RIM's BlackBerry, Apple's iOS, and Microsoft's Windows Phone 7.

### Android

You've probably seen plenty of commercials promoting phones, such as the Motorola Droid 2 or the Samsung Epic, that run the Android OS. Android phones are currently available running Android version 2.1 or 2.2. Froyo, also known as Android 2.2, is the latest version of the OS. The 2.2 update added support for Flash 10.1 (to let you watch Web-based videos on your phone) and a number of Microsoft Exchange security features, so Android phones are now safer for use in the business world. For example, Froyo integrates a remote wipe feature that

allows your company's IT staff to delete data from the phone, should you lose it. You can also sync your Exchange calendar with the stock Android calendar.

In terms of usability, Android is fairly easy to figure out for those familiar with touchscreen devices. The Android OS features a Desktop, titled the Home screen, where you will be able to place shortcut icons for your favorite programs. Touching an on-screen app opens the program. Most Android phones feature a number of Home screens, sometimes as many as five, that you can reach by swiping your finger to the left or right on the touchscreen.

Phones running Android can access a library of over 100,000 apps, so you can customize the phone to fit what you do. Google also actively promotes developers by providing

programming code and tips to help app designers build new programs. Android lets you run multiple apps at the same time to give you the

ability to have a program running in the background and quickly switch among open apps. You can copy and paste content, which is handy for business users who need to copy from email or Web sites to documents or vice versa. Android is also set up to handle voice commands, such as performing an address search in Google Maps or speaking a contact's name to dial the number.

Android-based mobile phones are available from AT&T, Verizon, Sprint, T-Mobile, Cricket, U.S. Cellular, and other popular carriers. Business users will want to invest in mobile phones running Android 2.2 because the new OS offers the security features necessary to protect critical information. A number of companies, including Lenovo, Toshiba, and Asus, have confirmed that they are working on tablet PCs running the Android OS.

### BlackBerry

The BlackBerry OS is developed by RIM (Research In Motion), and currently, you can find devices running either BlackBerry 6 or BlackBerry 5. BlackBerry has been considered the best OS for business users, and the reason is that RIM integrates corporate email, business applications, and the security necessary for your company's IT staff to be comfortable with you using the phone on the road.

The BlackBerry OS is built for quickness when messaging, communicating via email or voice, and using collaboration applications. For example, the BlackBerry 5 interface features a series of icons on the bottom of the screen for messages,



### BUYING TIPS

#### • Choose A Phone That Suits You

We suggest you go into a wireless carrier's brick-and-mortar store to test out the smartphone and OS to see if it feels intuitive to use. Key considerations are the screen's size and whether you want a physical keyboard to type.

## BUYING TIPS

### • Case & Screen Protector

Smartphones are expensive, so you'll want a case to protect it from drops and puncture damage. Additionally, invest in a screen protector because the screen's display—and possibly the touchscreen interface—are the primary way that you'll interact with the phone.



BlackBerry

email, contacts, calendar, media, and GPS (global positioning system). In BlackBerry 6, RIM has revamped the interface to give BlackBerry bigger consumer appeal. For instance, there's a Navigation Bar that allows you to jump among your phone apps in five different views: All, Favorites, Media, Downloads, and Frequent. In BlackBerry 5, the media content was available but pushed down under various menus.

BlackBerry App World offers more than 10,000 apps, which is fewer than the Android Market and iTunes App Store, but it's a good bet you'll find a wide variety of applications for

common tasks. RIM has expressed that it focuses on quality over quantity. To improve your ability to find apps and other content on the phone, RIM added a Universal Search feature to BlackBerry 6 that brings up results based on what you type in. Thus, you'll no longer need to browse for a program you want to load. There's also a Notification Bar that displays all your new alerts, including emails, missed calls, and text messages.

BlackBerry mobile phones are available from nearly every mobile phone carrier, but not all carriers will be offering models running BlackBerry 6. And even though it's not a feature of the OS, we should note that almost every BlackBerry phone includes a physical keyboard. If you or your employees aren't familiar with how to use a virtual keyboard (it can take some time to adjust), the presence of the physical keyboard may make it easier to type emails and Web addresses on the phone.

### iOS 4

iOS is Apple's mobile OS designed for use on its iPod touch, iPhone, and iPad devices. The iPhone wasn't the first touchscreen mobile phone, but the design of Apple's original iOS showed everyone how a smartly designed mobile OS can make portable devices simple to operate. For example, iOS offers gesture controls, such as tap (open), drag (move something from one place to another), swipe (move up, down, left, or right on-screen),

pinch (zoom in or out), flick (quickly move in a direction), and twist, that are intuitive ways to control the mobile device.

iOS 4 builds upon recent iOS versions with support for multitasking, so you can now switch between foreground and background apps. iOS 4 offers integration with Microsoft Exchange for email, calendar, and contacts information that's pushed directly to the iOS device. The built-in calendar lets you send out meeting invitations and accept or decline invites. If you plan to use it on the go, you'll like that iOS is built to recognize voice commands to initiate calls with people in your contacts list or open an application or email based on a keyword.

You're probably familiar with Apple's "there's an app for that" ad campaign, and with over 250,000 available, Apple isn't stretching the truth. Unlike some other mobile OSes, the applications are generally simple to operate, because the developers typically integrate the pinch gesture that lets you enlarge content and easily select from the on-screen options.



iOS 4

## BUYING TIPS

### • Go App Shopping

Apps can greatly enhance the functionality of your mobile phone, so check out the mobile operating system's app store or marketplace to find new programs that will help make you more productive.

You can cut, copy, and paste content among apps. FaceTime is another handy app built into iOS4, and it lets you have face-to-face conversations using an iPhone.

If you want to try iOS4, you can pick up an iPod touch or iPad at most any popular electronics retailer. The iPhone is a little more exclusive and is only available through AT&T, and even though there has been some speculation that the iPhone will be offered by Verizon, nothing had come of it as of press time. iOS 4 is a solid choice for both consumers and enterprises because it offers an easy-to-use interface and a wide selection of apps to get the job done.



Windows Phone 7

### Windows Phone 7

Microsoft was one of the first companies to develop a mobile OS, and Windows Phone 7 is Microsoft's re-entrance into the mobile market. At press time, Windows Phone 7 was still unavailable, but it will be available when you read this.

Microsoft designed the interface around a few key Hubs, which are essentially folders that let you quickly jump to apps offering similar functions. For example, there are Hubs (displayed as tiles on-screen) for People; Pictures; Music And Video; Games; Office; and Marketplace. You'll also find Live Tiles for Phone, Messaging, Browser, and various email clients; these apps show you the number of

messages, missed calls, or posts that are awaiting your attention. The main idea is that everything is organized on the Start screen to let you access information in fewer steps than you might have on another mobile OS.

Another bonus of Windows Phone 7 is that you don't have to unlock the phone to see the time, take a picture, or check missed calls, so the phone can more quickly bring important updates to your attention. You can add or remove the on-screen tiles to customize the interface, and you can choose to "pin" almost any item, such as a favorite contact or album of music, to the Start screen. On the base of any Windows Phone 7 device is a search button that you can press to bring up a Bing Search bar for quick queries.

For business users, Microsoft integrates Outlook and Exchange support to give you access to your work contacts, emails, tasks, and calendar appointments. You can access applications from the Marketplace app on the phone or from the Zune Marketplace, which features multimedia content similar to iTunes.

Without getting an official look at the OS, it's tough to say whether it'd be a good fit for consumers or business folk. We expect that Windows Phone 7 will be a consumer-friendly OS, but we can't say for certain how well it will appeal to road warriors. ■

BY NATHAN LAKE

## PRODUCT INFORMATION

Mobile Operating System	Software Designer	Contact Info	URL	Notable Features
Android 2.2	Google	N/A	<a href="http://www.android.com">www.android.com</a>	Android is both customizable and easy to use. You can organize all of your favorite apps on the Home screens.
BlackBerry 6	RIM	(800) 327-9085	<a href="http://www.rim.com">www.rim.com</a>	BlackBerry is known for its business prowess and ability to quickly deliver email and messages.
iOS 4	Apple	(800) 694-7466	<a href="http://www.apple.com">www.apple.com</a>	iOS features a slick-looking interface that's simple to understand and operate. iTunes is the biggest app store of the mobile Oses.
Windows Phone 7	Microsoft	Microsoft suggests calling your mobile carrier	<a href="http://www.windowsphone7.com">www.windowsphone7.com</a>	Windows Phone 7 is the newest mobile OS on the block, and it looks to have great features for consumers.

# Quick View Plus 11 Professional

## View, Share & Search Files

\$495 (for five users) | Avantstar  
(877) 829-7325 | www.avantstar.com



Many of us have come to rely upon Adobe's PDF (Portable Document Format) standard for distributing and viewing files in a format anyone can read (with a free viewer). Most of us have also experienced problems opening a native-format file and returned it to the sender with a note: "Can't open—please convert to PDF."

Quick View Plus 11 Pro eliminates this problem, approaching file compatibility from a different (and thoroughly functional) viewpoint. Rather than convert files from other programs into a special format, Quick View Plus 11 Pro opens, displays, and makes searchable native files created in more than 300 Windows, Mac, Internet, and DOS formats. In doing so, it puts control of file viewing into the hands of a file recipient rather than its author.

With Quick View Plus 11 Pro, you can search forward and backward in files by keyword, print files with formatting intact, and compress files to reduce their sizes prior to distribution. With a single click, you can also open files for editing. Quick View Plus 11 Pro locates the most compatible program for this task and opens the file within that program. (If no program that enables editing is available, Quick View Plus cannot perform this function.)

### Getting Started

Installation is fast and straightforward. The setup wizard asks if you want to install the program on a single PC or to a server for client deployment (each \$495 purchase includes a five-seat license). You then select from Typical, Compact, or

### Key Features:

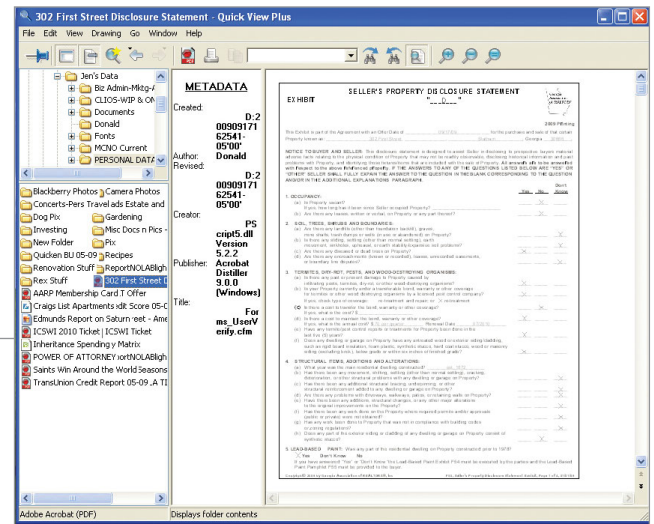
Quick View Plus 11 Professional displays and enables searching and printing of files created in other applications while maintaining formatting.

Custom installation. (We chose Typical, which has all the features the average user needs.)

The setup wizard doesn't offer to open Quick View Plus 11 Pro or lead you through a tutorial, but it is so easy to use that you won't need that help. Open the program and it immediately displays a File Navigator on the left that lists drives and folders in the top pane and subfolders or files from the selected folder at the bottom. Click on a file and Quick View Plus 11 Pro displays it in the main pane exactly as it was formatted. A third, central pane displays metadata. You can alter this display at any time, hiding the File Navigator or Metadata pane with the click of a button.

### Power With A Purpose

We were really impressed with this program and can imagine myriad ways it will be useful. The metadata contains every bit of information embedded in a file, not just the basic information routinely offered by native programs. It will enable you to



identify quickly whether you are viewing the most recent revision of a file, one you recently printed, and more. It displays how many minutes of editing time were spent on documents as clocked by the PC, effectively giving it time-tracking capabilities. If you don't want to view a document with formatting, you can switch to other views offered by the native program, such as Draft and Normal for Word documents. (This is helpful for searching through long documents such as legal briefs where formatting can be a distraction.)

If its price is too steep for you, Quick View Plus 11 Pro also comes in a Standard version. You will lose a few features—the most broadly applicable one being the metadata display. There is one caveat to all this bounty: Quick View Plus 11 Pro doesn't work with 64-bit systems. We hope this is something Avantstar fixes soon. ■

BY JENNIFER FARWELL

# WinZip Courier 3.0

## Compress & Secure Email Attachments

\$24.95 | WinZip Computing  
sales@winzip.com | www.winzip.com



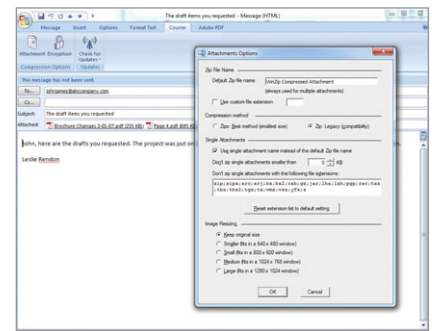
With the average corporate user sending some 19MB of email attachments each day (per analyst firm Radicati Group), it's no wonder corporations and consumers need fast Internet connections and capacious drives. WinZip, a leader in compression technologies, offers a solution with Courier.

With Courier, you can automatically zip and (if desired) encrypt (with 128-bit or 256-bit security) files you send as attachments. Courier can also resize attached images. The recipient of your missive receives all attachments as a single zipped file that can be opened with any computer that can unzip files (most newer PCs do).

**Key Features:** This email productivity tool compresses and encrypts attachments to send them more rapidly and securely over the Web.

Courier works with Microsoft Office 2003/2007/2010 (except for the 64-bit version) and integrates into Microsoft Outlook. In Outlook, it becomes a feature of the Ribbon interface. In other Office applications, it integrates into the email options. Users can also tweak settings through a Configure option on the Programs/All Programs menu.

The program also works with Yahoo! Mail, Microsoft Live Hotmail, and Google Gmail. With the Webmail services, Courier adds options for zipping,



encrypting, and reducing file size to the Open dialog box from which you select attachments. (For the Web mail feature to work, users must run IE7/8.) ■

BY JENNIFER FARWELL

# Ultra File Search

## Simple Search

Free | Stegisto  
info@ultrafilesearch.com | www.ultrafilesearch.com



If you miss the old Windows search interface, with its up-front search criteria and listing of results information (such as file location; creation date), look at Ultra File Search. This free utility offers an array of search options and displays results with myriad, sortable attributes. It also doesn't require indexing to be effective.

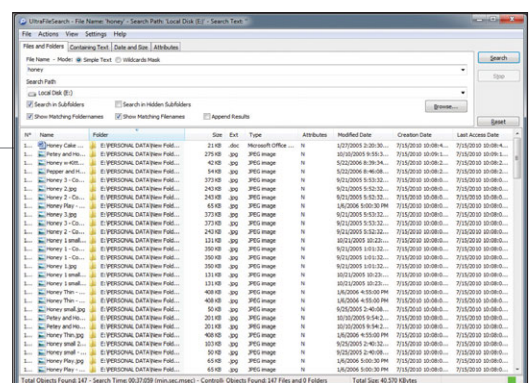
Ultra File Search sports four tabs—Files And Folders, Containing Text, Date And Size, and Attributes—each of which controls several criteria. Default settings are sensible, and most are easy to adjust with a click of the mouse. For example, default settings under Containing Text are for whole words and no hidden, system, media, or image files, but you can opt to search by

**Key Features:** This flexible utility supports targeted searches with a variety of criteria and allows users to export search results.

phrase, add case sensitivity, and exclude certain words.

Other tabs are equally flexible, with nearly any search combination possible. Start by searching one or more folders or media (optical, hard, or flash) by simple (full or partial) text or with wildcards, then add more restrictions as needed.

Ultra File Search isn't perfect. Some advanced features, such as selecting multiple drives at once, take an extra step, and searches by wildcard (the default) won't work without one. (Use



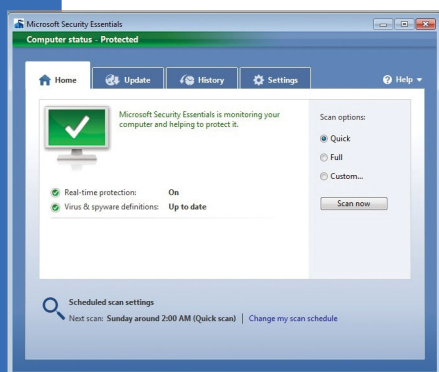
Simple Text instead.) Nevertheless, it's a nifty tool with a helpful export feature. The help files [www.ultrafilesearch.com/help.html](http://www.ultrafilesearch.com/help.html) will get you up to speed quickly. ■

BY JENNIFER FARWELL

## Microsoft News

### Microsoft Security Essentials Marks First Anniversary; Now Available To Small Businesses

A bit more than a year after the release of the free antivirus utility known as Microsoft Security Essentials, Microsoft says the software is now



Microsoft Security Essentials is now available to small businesses to install on up to 10 PCs.

running on over 30 million Windows PCs in 74 different countries. Although Microsoft Security Essentials was previously licensed only for home use, Microsoft recently announced that it's now available for small businesses to download and install on up to 10 PCs free of charge. Microsoft Security Essentials is compatible with Windows XP/Vista/7 and is available at [www.microsoft.com/security\\_essentials](http://www.microsoft.com/security_essentials).

### Microsoft Releases Free Ebook On Online Safety

Microsoft is offering a free ebook on how to use the Internet safely. Although primarily aimed at teens and parents, the book, called "Own Your Space," should also be useful to any adult wanting to learn more about how to spot and avoid online threats. Among the topics covered by the 16-chapter, 250+ page book are cyberbullying, social networking, malware, browser-based attacks, spam, and phishing.

The book is available at [tinyurl.com/34fu24k](http://tinyurl.com/34fu24k) in Adobe PDF or Microsoft XPS format, and can be downloaded in its entirety or by individual chapters.

### Goodbye Windows Live Spaces, Hello WordPress.com

It will soon be lights out for Windows Live Spaces, the blogging component of Microsoft's Windows Live family of online services—Microsoft has partnered with WordPress.com to provide Windows Live's blogging technology going forward.

Windows Live Spaces users (Microsoft says there are currently 30 million) have until

approximately the middle of March 2011 to migrate an existing blog to WordPress.com using a provided import tool, download an offline copy of a blog, or permanently delete it. For more details on the transition, visit [tinyurl.com/35vh84t](http://tinyurl.com/35vh84t).

## Windows Tips

### Make Microsoft Outlook Automatically Close Email Messages When Replying (Outlook 2003/2007/2010)

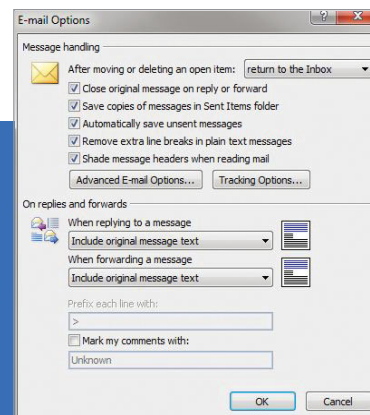
If you don't like that Microsoft Outlook leaves email message windows open after you've replied to an email, you can save yourself the trouble of closing them by configuring Outlook to do it automatically when you click Reply or Forward.

In Outlook 2007 or 2003 (the main Outlook program, not a message window), click Tools and Options, then click the E-mail Options button on the Preferences tab and check-mark Close Original Message On Reply Or Forward.

In Outlook 2010, the process is a bit different. Click the File tab and Options. In the left-hand column, select Mail, then in the right-hand column, scroll to find—and



A quick click, and Outlook will close emails automatically when you reply.



then checkmark—Close Original Message Window When Replying Or Forwarding.

### Hear A Tone When Pressing The CAPS LOCK Key (WinXP/Vista/7)

Have you ever started typing something and then looked up at the screen only to realize you MUST HAVE HIT THE CAPS LOCK KEY BY ACCIDENT? Given that keyboard Caps Lock indicator lights aren't typically very prominent and some wireless keyboards don't have them at all, seeing your text is usually the first and only sign of an inadvertent CAPS LOCK press.

If this happens to you a lot, turning on Windows' ToggleKeys feature will provide you with a much harder-to-miss audible tone whenever you press the CAPS LOCK, NUM LOCK, or SCROLL LOCK keys. To turn on ToggleKeys in Win7, type **toggle** in the Start search field, select Change How Your Keyboard Works, and then checkmark Turn on Toggle Keys. To find the Change How Your Keyboard Works setting in Vista, click Start, Control Panel, and Ease Of Access. To turn on ToggleKeys in WinXP, click Start, Control Panel, and Accessibility Options. Click Accessibility Options again and then checkmark Use ToggleKeys.

Note that by default in all three Windows versions,

holding down NUM LOCK for five seconds is another way to turn ToggleKeys on (as well as off), but the setting won't be retained after a system reboot.

### Add Video To The Windows 7 Start Menu

Win7's Start menu has links to your Documents, Pictures, and Music libraries, so why doesn't it include one for Videos? We're not quite sure, but fortunately it's easy to fix.

To add a Video item to the Start menu, right-click the Start button, select Properties, make sure the Start Menu tab is selected, and click the Customize button. Then scroll to Videos at the bottom of the list and change the setting from Don't Display This Item to Display As A Link.

### Actually Use Windows 7's WordPad

If you've shied away from using WordPad in the past because it only worked with TXT or RTF (Rich Text Format) files, you might want to take another look at the version that comes with Win7. Unlike its predecessor, Win7's WordPad can open and save DOCX and ODT files created by Office 2007 and OpenOffice.org, respectively, provided they're not too complex. (Unfortunately, it still doesn't work with Office 2003 DOC files.)

## Windows News

### Windows Phone 7 Launches

Hoping to significantly bolster its share of the smartphone operating system market, Microsoft has officially launched Windows Phone 7, its answer to the increasingly popular Apple iOS and Google Android. Highlights of the Windows Phone 7 include a simplified tile- and hub-based user interface, a retooled app store, and integration with Microsoft's Xbox Live and Zune services for gaming, music, and video.



Steve Ballmer displays the first crop of Windows Phone 7 devices.

At an October press event in New York City, Microsoft CEO Steve Ballmer showcased a group of nine new Windows Phone 7 devices made by Dell, HTC, LG, and Samsung. The five phones initially slated for sale in the United States—the Dell Venue Pro, LG Quantum, HTC HD7, HTC 7 Surround, and Samsung Focus—have different physical designs and screen sizes but many features in common, including a 1GHz processor, a 5MP (megapixel) camera, and an 800 x 480 resolution touchscreen display.

Following an initial launch in parts of Europe and Asia, Windows Phone 7 made its U.S. debut on Nov. 8 with AT&T and T-Mobile starting sales of the Samsung Focus and HTC HD7, respectively. AT&T and T-Mobile are currently the only two U.S. carriers offering Windows Phone 7, though devices are expected to come to Sprint (and possibly Verizon) sometime in 2011.

Microsoft also announced that a copy and paste feature, notably absent from the initial version of Windows Phone 7, would be added via an update early in 2011.

## Libraries In Windows 7

# Files Of A Feather Flock Together

You're pretty good at keeping your computer files organized, aren't you? You store all of your audio files in the My Music folder. Well, except for the playlists you make—those show up in your media player's folder. And, er, except for the family holiday letters your spouse leaves on the Desktop instead of in My Documents. And . . .

OK, 'fess up. Somehow your data kicked over its traces. Instead of being neatly corralled in their proper folders, your video clips, tax returns, and other files are now grazing here, there, and everywhere. This isn't a bad situation *per se*, but it has the potential to be. If you're like us, you've learned the hard way that when your files start to sprawl, it becomes harder to find them and easier to leave them out of backups.

At this point, it might be impractical for you to move all of your personal files to a handful of designated folders. Not only could it take you considerable time to do so, but you might also negatively affect applications and files that expect to find your data in particular places. If you've made music playlists, for example, you'll find that your media player will skip over any songs that you have moved to different folders.

A less obtrusive way to get a handle on your data diaspora is to use Windows 7's Libraries feature. Libraries let you group folders that have something in common, such as photo files, so you can work with all of your pictures in a single window, for example. The neat part is that adding a folder to a library doesn't alter its files' physical locations on your

drive(s), so you don't have to worry about breaking dependent items such as music playlists.

## Steps Of The Library

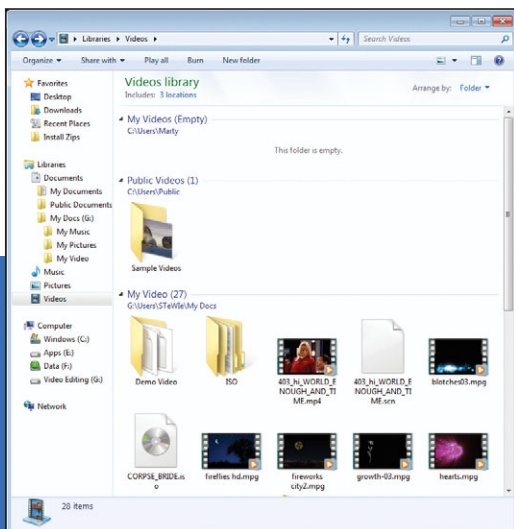
Press WIN (the Windows logo key)-E to open Windows Explorer. Along the left side of the panel, you'll see a Libraries category with Documents, Music, Pictures, and Videos in it: These are Win7's pre-made libraries covering four common types of user data. Of course, you can make your own libraries to suit your needs (more on that later).

Click the Pictures library and the 2 Locations link. (It may say 3 Locations or more.) In the pop-up window, you'll see that by default, the Pictures library contains the My Pictures folder in C:\USERS\

add another folder of photos to the library—something else we'll explain below—you'll find it in this pane, too.

It might help you to think of a library as a kind of a club with folders as its members. Said folders can be members of other clubs, too. Another analogy is that a library is akin to a folder containing other folders; a super-folder, if you will. However, a library is different from a folder in that it doesn't "exist" one step up from its folders in the hierarchy of files. Moreover, deleting a library won't erase any of its contents. You'll simply get rid of the virtual super-folder grouping the real folders in one place—or dissolve the "club's" membership.

Although a particular folder, such as My Videos, can belong to multiple libraries, it can only reside in one actual folder or directory on the drive, such as C:\USERS\



Here's a screen shot of the Videos library on a PC with video files scattered across several folders.

Documents, a folder of animated presentations in My Videos, a folder of executive photos for an update of the company Web site, and so on. Even though these folders have disparate file types and belong to other libraries (such as Pictures and Documents), they can still be members of your Work library.

Win7 does impose a few restrictions on the folders you can add to a library. For instance, you can include folders on external hard drives and USB flash drives (if they appear in the Hard Disk Drives section in Computer), but not on optical discs. For details, click Start and Help And Support, and then search for “libraries.”

## Open Your Own Branch

It's easy to make your own libraries in Win7. Click Libraries in the left column of an Explorer window and then click New Library along the top edge. Type a label for the new library, such as **Finances**, and press ENTER.

When a library is empty, like the one you just made, you can assign folders to it by double-clicking it and selecting Include A Folder. Now, browse to the folder you want, such as a group

of tax PDFs. Click it to highlight it and then click Include Folder. You can put up to 50 folders into a library. To add folders to an existing library that already contains one or more folders, right-click the library, choose Properties, and then click Include A Folder. Note that you can add folders to Win7's pre-made libraries such as Music and Documents, too. In other words, you're not limited to customizing only the libraries you create.

The Properties window also lets you adjust a library's Arrange By options in Windows Explorer. For example, if you set the Optimize This Library For drop-down menu to Videos, the Arrange By menu will include file sorting filters such as Length, Year, and Type.

## The Library's Mail Slot

We're all in favor of anything that promotes drag-and-drop ease. Win7 makes it a little easier to put a new song into your music collection, for

example, because it lets you drag and drop the file onto the name of the library itself, such as Music. The song will automatically move into the folder in the Music library designated as its default save location.

You can change a library's default save location so that when you move a file to a library, and not specifically into one of the folders it comprises, the file will land in the folder that's appropriate for most of the data of that type. Right-click a library's name and choose Properties. Next, click the new destination folder under Library Locations. Click Set Save Location, Apply, and OK.

One reason to change the default save locations of your media file libraries is to keep your C: partition from getting full. For instance, lately some users have been installing Windows on an SSD (solid-state drive) to make their PCs feel more responsive and boot more quickly. However, because SSDs are relatively expensive compared to hard drives, many

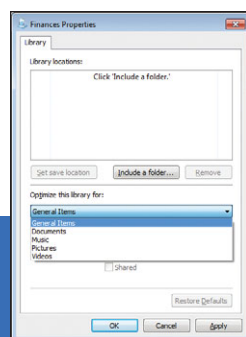
users use a small 30 to 40GB SSD as a boot drive (C:) in conjunction with a separate hard drive for mass storage (such as E:).

Even though you don't need to dig into a library to find a home for a file in a particular folder, you still can if you need to. For instance, say you've downloaded a ringtone for your cell phone. It may belong in your Music library, technically, but you don't necessarily want it in the same folder as your “real” songs. Instead of saving it to your Music library, which would drop the file in the library's default save location with your music collection, dig down into the Music library's folders along the left side of the window to find or create a separate folder that's more appropriate. That way, the next time you play a random mix of your music, you won't hear partial snippets of tunes, podcasts, system sounds, and so on.

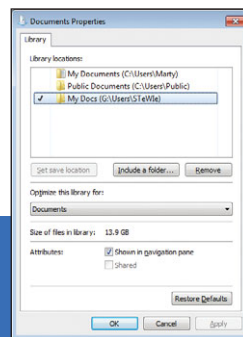
## More Library Science

For information on sharing libraries with Windows Media Center or other computers on your network, check out Win7's Help And Support. ■

BY MARTY SEMS



You can change a library's file Arrange By options with the Optimize This Library For drop-down menu.



The check mark denotes the folder that's the default save location for files you drag-and-drop into a library.

## Windows For Business

# Run Windows XP In Windows 7

Windows 7 offers a slew of new features that makes it worth upgrading to. Microsoft even offers support for a Windows XP Mode feature to make it possible to run applications that were designed for use in WinXP, so you don't need to worry about whether your key business and productivity applications will run on a new Win7 machine. Here, we'll cover how you can install and use Windows XP Mode in Win7.

### What Is WinXP Mode?

Available on the Professional, Ultimate, and Enterprise editions of Win7, Windows XP Mode is a utility that uses virtual technology to open a window that functions exactly like WinXP does. For example, you can click the Start button and load programs,

open My Computer and access files on your hard drive, and change settings. Because Windows XP Mode operates as a fully functioning copy of WinXP, you can use it to run programs that are designed to function only in WinXP.

### How Do I Use It?

First, you'll need to download Windows XP Mode, because it isn't present in Windows 7 by default. To do so, visit [tinyurl.com/c8274e](http://tinyurl.com/c8274e). At Step 2, click the Select System drop-down menu and select your version of Win7 and then select your Language. Next, click the Windows XP Mode button to download it. Windows will ask to validate your copy of Windows, and after, you'll click Continue, open the download, and save it to your PC. Once the download finishes, click Run.

Next, click Windows Virtual PC, save the file, and after it finishes downloading, click Run. Follow the on-screen instructions in the Download And Install Updates wizard. Note that Windows will ask you to reboot when the Windows Virtual PC is installed—but you should first download and install the Windows XP Mode Update before restarting. Click the Windows XP Mode Update button, select Save, choose Open, and click Yes at the Windows Standalone Installer Update window. Once it's finished installing, you can restart your PC.

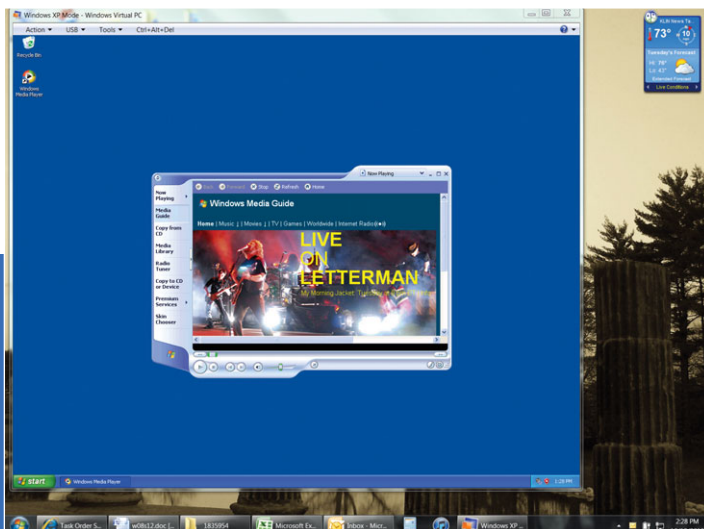
To run Windows XP, click the Start button, select All Programs, choose Windows Virtual PC, and click Windows XP Mode. Click the I Accept The License Terms and click Next, where you can enter WinXP's password. If you'd rather not re-enter a password each time you use Windows XP Mode, click the Remember My Credentials box. Click Next

and choose the method for how Windows XP Mode will update. Click the Start Setup button, and if you didn't click Remember My Credentials at the previous step, you'll need to enter your password again.

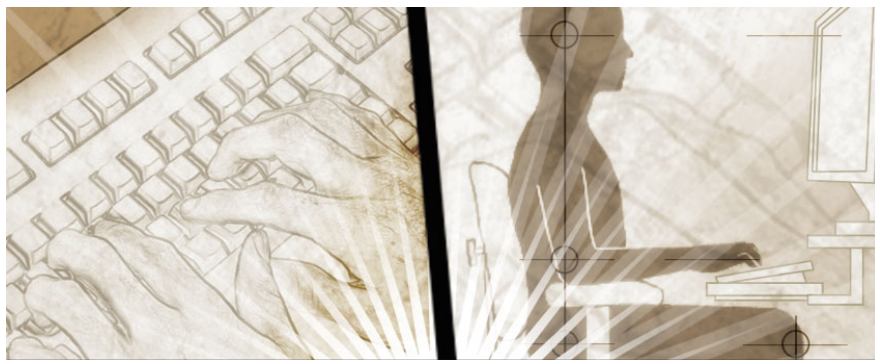
### Inside Windows XP Mode

With Windows XP Mode running, you can now install your business or productivity applications that work solely in WinXP. Note that if you insert a disc into the PC, Win7's AutoPlay may bring up a pop-up menu that offers to open to the disc, but you'll want to close it and open My Computer in Windows XP Mode. Otherwise, you'll be using Win7 to play or explore the disc. When you install a program inside of Windows XP Mode, the application will conveniently be listed in the Win7 Start menu under Windows XP Mode Applications. Thus, you won't need to start Windows XP Mode to load your legacy applications. ■

BY NATHAN LAKE



You can run Windows XP Mode in window or full-screen mode.



Perhaps the most important parts of your posture are the shoulder, neck, and head positioning. The upper torso is a problem area. Stress in this area can cause tension headaches and other annoying pain. Once the rest of the body is set, relax your shoulders. Make sure your head is lined up with the rest of your torso and tilted slightly forward so there is less stress on your neck. This will also improve your viewing angle and put less strain on your eyes.

Regular breaks are a commonly overlooked solution to desk-related strain. Whether it's looking away from the computer monitor for 30 seconds every 15 minutes or standing up and walking around, taking a break is important to avoid compounding the regular stress that is put on your body. If you don't have time for a break, you should at least stretch your hands, fingers, shoulders, and neck every few hours to loosen up. These tips may seem simple, but they are essential to comfortably working at a desk for long periods of time.

# Office Ergonomics 101

## Improve Your Health & Productivity

**T**he human body wasn't designed to sit in front of a computer for eight or more hours a day. Because of this, you need to be aware of your posture when sitting and your position in relation to your monitor, keyboard, and mouse. A constant stress or pressure, no matter how small, on your fingers, wrists, joints, and other body parts can have long-lasting health effects. Thankfully, there are steps you can take to prevent these issues. By recognizing bad habits and learning to correct them, you can improve your overall health and comfort—and likely increase your productivity.

### Check Your Posture

The first thing you should look at when improving office ergonomics is your posture. Make sure your forearms and thighs are parallel to the floor and your knees and elbows are bent at around 90 or 120 degrees. Your back should be straight and your feet should be flat on the floor.

Periodically check to ensure that your body is in a comfortable and natural position that's not putting pressure on part of your body. Most chairs are highly adjustable. Take a few minutes to try out different settings so the chair can help you maintain the correct position.



### Adjust Your Computer Components

The location of your keyboard, mouse, monitor, and other components is as important as posture when improving the ergonomics of your office. In addition to changing your posture to adapt to working at a desk, you should set up your computer components in a way that will reduce strain on your body. Make sure that you aren't stretching too far to reach your keyboard or straining your eyes trying to read documents on

The TechniMobili Multi-Function Computer Desk RTA-8211 (\$189.99; [www.rtaproducts.com](http://www.rtaproducts.com)) has a tray with enough room to use a keyboard and mouse as well as space underneath to fit almost any chair.

## Computers & Electronics



The HON Volt Task Chair (5703) (\$200; [www.hon.com](http://www.hon.com)) is a padded office chair that lets you adjust its height and tilt to ensure you have good posture.

keyboard trays that make it easier to maintain a comfortable position while typing or using a mouse. There are also desks that are height-adjustable. Corner or L-shaped desks are great if you use multiple systems because you can leave computer components in the same position while moving your chair from one desktop to the other.

**2. Choose a chair.** Office chairs come in as many varieties as desks. Most chairs have customization options that will let you adjust the height and recline. Choose a chair that is not only comfortable but has features that encourage sitting with good posture, such as armrests or a headrest. Armrests can help you keep your arms in a good position while a headrest is great for maintaining correct neck and head posture. Don't rely on these features too much, though. If, for instance, your armrest holds your arm in an awkward position, you could encounter problems. Once you find the right chair, adjust it so that your back

your computer screen. Here are a few tips to keep in mind when setting up your desk.

**1. Find the right desk.** If you work at home or are allowed to choose your own desk style, there are many factors to consider. Some desks have

has adequate support and your feet are flat on the floor.

**3. Place your keyboard correctly.** Keyboard placement is pretty simple if you've taken the time to adjust your chair and posture. The keyboard height should allow you to bend your elbows at a 90-degree angle with your forearms and wrists as straight as possible. Avoid moving the keyboard too close or too far away from you. You may need to add a wrist rest or keyboard tray if you have trouble making any of these adjustments. Some ergonomic keyboards are curved or angled so your hands, wrists, and forearms sit in a more natural position. If possible, try multiple keyboards to find out which one is most comfortable for you.

**4. Use your mouse sparingly.** Use your keyboard instead of your mouse whenever possible. For instance, rather than scroll through a document, use the Down arrow on the keyboard. Keyboard shortcuts, such as CTRL-C to copy, also help minimize mouse usage. Place your mouse next to your keyboard so that when you do need to use your mouse, moving from one component to the other doesn't take much effort. You may need a different mouse pad or a wrist rest to provide extra comfort. As with keyboards, there are many variations of mice available including



### Microsoft Natural Ergonomic Keyboard 4000

**T**he Natural Ergonomic Keyboard 4000 from Microsoft has many features that make it a comfortable and easy-to-use keyboard. It has a built-in plush palm rest that eases the pressure on your hands while typing. Groups of keys are split to help keep your arms and wrists in a comfortable position. The Natural Ergonomic Keyboard 4000 also has customizable hotkeys. You can set different keys to open Word documents and check your email or launch an Internet browser. This keyboard is great for those who want ergonomic comfort and a variety of productivity tools in one package.

Price: \$59.95 | [www.microsoft.com](http://www.microsoft.com)



### Fellowes Gliding Palm Support With Microban Protection

**T**he Fellowes Gliding Palm Support with Microban Protection is different from traditional mouse pad wrist rests in that the wrist rest itself moves along with your hand as you use your mouse. The support is self-adjusting, helps keep your wrist in a natural position, and can be used with the included mouse pad or by itself on a desktop surface. By adding this mouse pad and wrist rest to your existing desktop setup, you'll be able to work longer without putting stress on your wrist and hand.

Price: \$27.99 | [www.fellowes.com](http://www.fellowes.com)

traditional and trackball as well as touchpads like those built into laptops. When shopping, pay attention to the size and weight of the mouse.

**5. Move away from your monitor.** A good rule of thumb is to sit 2 to 4 feet away from the monitor, (though you may choose to tweak that rule, based on screen size). Sitting too close or too far away can cause eyestrain, which can lead to fatigue and headaches. Also pay attention to the height of your monitor. Adjust the height so your sight line matches up with the top of the monitor and you're looking slightly downward at the screen. If necessary, adjust the screen resolution or zoom in on Web pages and documents. Most monitors let you adjust the brightness and contrast to make reading text easier. There are also monitor filters (which you can place over your screen) that will help reduce glare or magnify on-screen items.

If you use multiple monitors or a desktop and laptop combination, you may need to make more adjustments. It may be inconvenient to change your posture depending on which device you're using so you should decide which one you will use the most and make adjustments accordingly. Position your laptop similarly to how you would position your keyboard and set it on your desk instead of placing it on your lap. No matter how well-adjusted your monitor, you should still take regular breaks and work on assignments that don't require a computer every few hours.

### Ergonomics At Home

Be aware of adjustments you can make in places besides your workstation. For instance, arrange your computer components the same way at home as you do in the office. This is an easy way to remain consistent

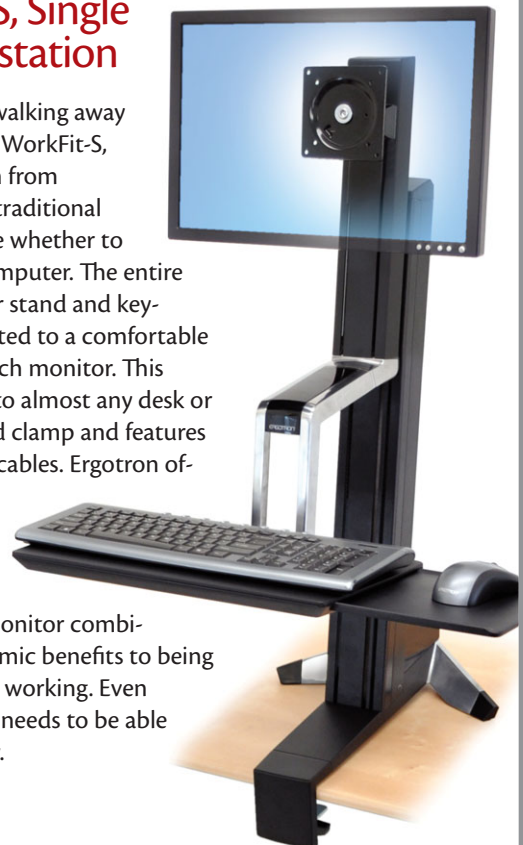
when moving from one location to another. While thinking about your posture and other ergonomic considerations may seem inconvenient at first, the long-term health benefits will be well worth the effort. ■

BY JOSH COMPTON

### Ergotron WorkFit-S, Single LD Sit-Stand Workstation

**I**f you want to stand without walking away from your work, consider the WorkFit-S, Single LD Sit-Stand Workstation from Ergotron. This new take on the traditional computer stand lets you choose whether to sit or stand while using your computer. The entire unit, including the LCD monitor stand and keyboard/mouse tray, can be adjusted to a comfortable height. It can hold up to a 22-inch monitor. This workstation can be connected to almost any desk or cubicle setup using the included clamp and features an easy way to secure and hide cables. Ergotron offers multiple configurations in the WorkFit-S line of workstations, including ones that can hold larger monitors, multiple monitors, or even laptop and monitor combinations. There are many ergonomic benefits to being able to both sit and stand while working. Even someone with the best posture needs to be able to change positions periodically.

Price: \$379 | [www.ergotron.com](http://www.ergotron.com)



# Skype For Your Office

## Call Clients From A Skype Phone



The Grandstream GXV3140 desktop phone works with your router for easy Skype calling—right from the device itself and not your computer.

Skype is a popular phone service that works surprisingly well. Available as a free software download, the service lets you place calls (including video calls) over the Internet. Of course, to make free calls, you have to dial another Skype user. To call phones and cell phones, you'll need to sign up for one of Skype's calling plans, which let you pay by the minute or the month. If many of your customers and partners are also Skype users, this likely represents a cost savings (over your current phone plan) in two ways: You can call the Skype users free, then pay as little as 1.2 cents per minute to call people who don't have Skype.

Using a laptop and headset isn't as convenient as using a phone, which is why many users are turning to desktop phones that are designed to work with Skype. Many of these models look almost indistinguishable from a landline phone you use in an office. There is usually a large dialing pad, a corded handset, and an LCD that lets you see who is calling and configure phone options. The one major difference, though, is that a Skype desktop phone has an Ethernet port. Many of the latest Skype desktop phones do not even provide the standard RJ11 telephone port. Once you connect the phone to your computer

network, you can pick up the phone and start dialing.

Of course, as with any Internet service that promises to revolutionize telephone communication, there are a few steps required to make it all work—and to work smoothly. For this article, we'll assume that you have already signed up with Skype at [www.skype.com](http://www.skype.com).

## 1 Set Up The Phone

Setting up a Skype desktop phone is, at least at first, remarkably similar to setting up a standard landline phone. In fact, no one will even notice the difference. We used a Grandstream Networks GXV3140 ([www.grandstream.com](http://www.grandstream.com)) for our testing with Skype. This phone is really like a small computer: It runs applications for video chatting, accessing the Web, and talking over Skype. Skype runs as an app on the phone. Before running the app, you will need to set up the phone and have a computer handy for some of the setup steps.

When you first open the box, the phone looks like every other desktop phone. There is one coiled RJ11 cord you use to connect the handset to the phone base. Then, you connect the included Ethernet cable (it's the bigger, thicker cord) to the router port on the device. Plug the other end of the Ethernet cord into a spare port at the back of your network router. Connect the power cord and the phone will start up for the first time.

## 2 Upgrade The Firmware

Before you can make your first call, you'll need to configure the Skype service. The phone ships without Skype installed, so you will need to upgrade the firmware. To do that, you will need to know the IP (Internet

Protocol address of the phone. An IP address is a label that is assigned by the router to each device on your network. Fortunately, the phone itself provides some clues for finding the IP address. When the phone first starts, you will see an option for the IPVideoTalk app, which is a way of holding a video chat with a friend that is unrelated to Skype. This app shows

the power cord and plugging it back in. The firmware is upgraded.

## 3 Configure Skype

Once the phone boots up and the firmware loads, you can now access Skype. Press the Menu button on the phone and then, using the arrow keys on the phone, scroll over to the Social Networks option. Press the center button near the arrow keys to select. Then, press the button again to start Skype.

If you do not already have a Skype account, you can join the service by going to [www.skype.com](http://www.skype.com) and then clicking the Join option and filling in the pertinent details.

for your username and password, which are much easier to enter via a computer than on the phone with its alphanumeric keypad. You can also select an option to start Skype automatically. Leave the Maximum Video Bitrate alone for now and click Save. Go back to the phone and start Skype again or just reboot the phone. Skype will now start up and show you your contacts list.

## 4 Make Your First Call

Fortunately, even with some of the back and forth setting up the phone and using your computer for some of the configuration steps, making calls with the Skype service on the GXV3140 phone is remarkably easy. To make a call to a contact (those who have invited you to connect through the service), you can use the arrow keys: Simply select a contact and press the green Call button. When you are done with the call, press the red End Call button to disconnect from that caller.

To make a call to someone who does not use Skype, press the arrow key to move right in the Skype app until the Call tab is selected. Here, you can type in any number (area code first) to place the call using Skype. After you type in the number, just press the green Call button.

The advantage of making calls this way is that you are using the Skype

you an IP address for the phone, so just write it down.

Once you know the IP address, open any Web browser on your computer and type in those digits, then press ENTER. (Make sure your computer is connected to the same router as the phone.) You will see the administration page for the GXV3140 and a prompt to log in. Just type **admin** and **admin** for the username and password fields, then click Login. Click the Maintenance tab and then click Upgrade on the left. In the Firmware Server Path field, type the following: **www.grandstream.com/BETA TEST/GXV3140\_Skype/Firmware**.

On this same page, make sure HTTP is selected in the Upgrade Via pop-up window and check to make sure the Automatic Upgrade Rule is set to Always Check At Bootup. Now, click Save, wait a few seconds, and then reboot the phone by unplugging

Now, unless you are a glutton for punishment, you may want to switch back to your computer to configure your Skype account. You can add your username and password and configure settings for Skype on the phone itself, but it's easier to just do this on the computer.

So, on your PC, go back to your Web browser, type the IP address of the phone into the address bar and press ENTER. Log in again and click the Application Settings tab and then click Skype. Here, you will see fields

Skype calls are free between Skype users. If you want to dial someone else who does not use Skype, you still can. You simply need to add credits to your account for a minimal pennies-per-minute fee.

service instead of a long distance provider, so the call occurs over the Internet for a minimal charge. To make calls outside of the Skype service, though, you need Skype credits. The basic idea works like one of those by-the-minute cell phones where you add money to your account in order to make calls. To purchase Skype credits, go to Skype.com on your computer and then click the Prices tab and look under the Rates section. Once you purchase credits, you will see the amount you purchased listed under the Call tab.

Note that you can also send instant messages to Skype users (look under the Chat tab), see your call history, and even change your Profile settings for Skype (under the Profile tab).

### 5 Improve The Quality

Now, as easy as all of this Skype calling is on the GXV3140 phone, and whether you are calling other Skype users or outside of the Skype service, you may find that the call quality is reduced at times. Call quality will vary based on the speed of your broadband connection, how many people are using the Internet at your office, and even the time of day. You may have a very fast connection but during business hours or when there is a major news event, the heavy Internet traffic may have an impact. The tell-tale signs of congestion and slow Internet problems with Skype include some oddities such as a digital delay, a chirping sound, or just outright call drops.

Fortunately, you can tweak some of the settings on your router to help improve quality. These settings tend to

vary among router companies, but here are some general tips you can use. For starters, you will need to access your router. You can find the router's

192.168.0.1 because the router address always ends in a 1.

So, once you know the router's IP address, type that into any Web browser's Address bar on your computer and press ENTER. You will likely need to log in to the router's admin page. (Again, consult your manual to find that info.) Once you do log in, look for a section called QoS (Quality of Service). For example, with our test router, which has an IP address of 192.169.0.1, you click the Advanced tab and then QoS Engine. Here, you can enable options such as "traffic shaping" and "automatic uplink speed," which automatically provide more bandwidth for services such as Skype that require a steady connection.

### Make The Call

In the end, even if it takes some time to set up a desktop phone that supports Internet calling, and then to configure Skype and tweak the QoS settings, it is a good investment. The benefits are low calling costs, easy access to your Skype contacts, and even a few extra

perks, such as being able to quickly see a call history and chat using instant messaging with Skype contacts. Skype calling helps you get even more value out of your Internet connection—and have more fun doing it. ■

BY JOHN BRANDON



Skype runs as an app on the Grandstream GXV3140 desktop phone along with Twitter, Facebook, and other tools. To use Skype, you may need to upgrade the phone's firmware.



You can log into Skype directly from the phone. However, it is much easier to add your login info on a PC (using a Web browser) and save this info. You can even log in to Skype automatically.

IP address in the manual, but there is a simple trick to finding it. If you know the IP address of the phone (which you found when you configured Skype access), you can do a bit of cyber-sleuthing to find the router's IP. For example, let's say the phone's IP address is 192.168.0.135. You can be assured that your router's IP is

**In the end, even if it takes some time to set up a desktop phone that supports Internet calling, and then to configure Skype and tweak the Quality of Service settings, it is a good investment.**

# BUSINESS TECH

## Smartphones Are Smart Business

**A**lmost any way you look at it, smartphones have an impact on the way business is conducted all around the world. Corporations deploy fleets of smartphones to their employees who use them as a vital means of communication with clients and colleagues, whether by email, text, video, or voice.

Recent research confirms that the entire world is adopting wireless communication as a common avenue of contact. According to tech research firm iSuppli ([www.isuppli.com](http://www.isuppli.com)), global wireless service subscriptions are anticipated to reach 5.1 billion by the time you read this article. Moreover, iSuppli reports that close to 75% of the world's population will be paying for a wireless subscription by the end of the year. Now that wireless communication is reaching the greater part of the earth's population, it's no wonder that smartphones are on the verge of saturating small businesses.

### Hands-On Smartphones

Jagdish Rebello, senior director and principal analyst of communications and consumer electronics at iSuppli, estimates that by the end of 2014, there will be about 6.5 billion wireless subscriptions worldwide. The timeline of the international smartphone popularity started several years ago, however.

"When you start looking at what's happened over the last three years, a



BlackBerry phones from Research In Motion ([www.rim.com](http://www.rim.com)), such as the BlackBerry Tour 9630, have traditionally been most appropriate for business use because they support "portable office" tools and apps, including Microsoft Office files, email account management, and media storage for long business trips.

phenomenon, that for all practical purposes has been driven by the iPhone and now reaching critical momentum with the introduction of the Android operating system, users [are] starting to see the advantages of using a smartphone not only for

productivity applications but for checking email and presentations," Rebello says.

"Historically speaking, the smartphone was to be primarily driven by the requirements of the high-end enterprise. They were looking at smartphones as mobile productivity tools," says Rebello. "What these smartphones offered the consumer was very high-end features and security."

Rebello says that the smartphone is a dual-purpose device. "The smartphone has sort of become an indispensable tool. It's allowing people to look at the device as not only for enterprise and productivity applications, but also for content enjoyment and creation."

However, small businesses are still in the process of fully adopting mobile technologies. "People need to understand [the smartphone] has yet to become the primary business tool. I think it's safe to say that a significant percentage of small businesses are starting to integrate smartphones."

Rebello predicts smartphone shipments will exceed approximately 250 million units worldwide by the end of 2010, growing from [approximately] 180 million in 2009. Overall, the smartphone has served as a catalyst for change, which means there's a greater potential for mobile technology to permeate various business sectors more broadly. ■

BY JOANNA CLAY

## READERS' TIPS

Many of our readers come across fast, easy ways to solve a problem or accomplish a task. Well, we'd like to hear about it! If you have a great tip you'd like to share, email us at [readertips@smartcomputing.com](mailto:readertips@smartcomputing.com). If we print your tip, we'll send you a free *Smart Computing* T-shirt. You'll be the envy of all (well, some) of your friends.

Please include your first name, last name, and address, so that we can give you credit if we print your tip. (And so that we can send your T-shirt to you, of course.) Please limit your tip to 200 words or fewer. Not all tips received will be printed, and tips may be edited for length and clarity.



# Short & Simple Tips To Make Things Easier

Compiled by Nathan Lake

### **Reduce Manual Labor**

I've found a way to reduce the frustration that I've had with trying to find or remember where I put the instructions for all my electronics devices. I created a folder in My Documents titled "Manuals" where I store PDF (Portable Document Format) files of the instructions I scan and download. For the manuals printed on smaller sheets of paper, I scan them to larger sizes and file them by product name in the folder. I've also noticed that some manufacturers no longer offer printed instructions, so the Manuals folder gives me a place to store the missing directions.

**Jerry G., Fair Oaks, Calif.**

### **Delete Prior Address Before Forwarding Emails**

Often, we get forwarded emails with many prior addresses from the previous forwards, which can be a goldmine of resources for a malicious spammer. If you find something worthy of passing on, I suggest that you click Forward, put your own address in the To field, and place all the addresses of the people you wish to forward the content to in the Bcc (blind carbon copy) field. Then, highlight and delete all of the previous addresses. I even delete the "FW" and "FWD" tags in the Subject line, so the email will get less attention from anyone with malicious intent.

**Bill R., North Fort Myers, Fla.**

### **Wireless Keyboard & Mouse Problem**

One of the problems I've found with wireless keyboards and mice is that it's not always possible to access the setup and boot menus with the wireless peripherals, because the drivers

are not yet loaded. In the past, the only solution available to me was borrowing a wired keyboard from a neighbor. Now, I keep an old wired mouse and wired keyboard on hand, just in case I need them to access the setup menus.

**Paul H., Palos Hills, Ill.**

### **Free Downloadable Books**

In the May 2010 issue of *Smart Computing*, the "Web Tips" article features a tip regarding free audio books, and I want to share another way to obtain free audio books. Most public libraries have Web sites that are linked to a digital library powered by OverDrive, which is a digital media service. The OverDrive software is a free download that is compatible with Macs and PCs. Using OverDrive, you can download media and then transfer the downloaded books to your media player. (OverDrive audio books are compatible with most MP3 players, including Apple devices, but be sure to search the site to check device compatibility for the media formats you wish to download.) To learn more about this great free resource, check with your local library or go to [search.overdrive.com](http://search.overdrive.com) and see if your library offers free downloads.

**Debby H., Willits, Calif.**

### **CD Labels**

There's some guesswork when printing CD labels, and if not done right, you may waste perfectly good disc labels. To ensure my labels print correctly, I first print onto the nonlabel side of the sheet. Then, I hold it up to the light to see if the text is printed where I want it. Once I get everything configured right, I just reverse the sheet and print out my label.

**David A., Mashpee, Mass.**

# HyperDock

by Seth Colaner

As much as I like Mac OS X, I'd be lying if I said that Microsoft's Windows 7 operating system was anything but a winner. Microsoft did an excellent job delivering the heir to the Windows XP throne, especially with those many little details that make using a computer a little easier and more convenient.

By far, my favorite feature is the thumbnail preview on the Taskbar. Basically, there are icons on the Taskbar representing whichever programs you have running—say, Microsoft Word, Microsoft Excel, Mozilla Firefox, Windows Explorer, and an IM (instant messaging) program. If you position the cursor over one of the icons, a thumbnail preview of that program's window will appear. If you have multiple windows open for one program, you'll see multiple thumbnails. Additionally, if you hold the cursor over a thumbnail preview for a moment, a full-sized preview of that page will appear and then vanish as soon as you move the cursor off of the thumbnail.

The feature is an excellent way to manage your open windows, especially if you're juggling a lot of open applications, and it's a feature that is woefully absent in Mac OS X. On a Mac, if you minimize an open window, it appears on the right side of the Dock as a thumbnail; however, if an open window is not minimized, there is no thumbnail. This isn't a very effective method of managing open windows if you're working with multiple programs, at least one of which has multiple open windows. Some open windows are effectively hidden from view, while some others are viewable as thumbnails, making it an annoyance to locate the window you're looking for. Over time, the net effect is quite maddening.

The solution for Mac users is HyperDock ([hyperdock.bahoom.de](http://hyperdock.bahoom.de)), a program that essentially brings the functionality of Windows 7's thumbnail preview to the Mac. When you position the cursor over an open application in the Dock, HyperDock shows you thumbnails of all of that program's open windows, both those that are up



and those that are minimized.

If you hover over one of the thumbnails, you'll see a full-sized preview of that window.

HyperDock offers other capabilities, as well. It enables Windows Snap (another Windows 7 feature), so when you drag a window to any screen edge, it'll automatically resize.

Additionally, when you hover the mouse over the iCal icon, it'll show a summary of upcoming events; when you hover over the iTunes icon, the preview will display the song and artist currently playing, play/pause controls, and track-skipping controls.

There are plenty of HyperDock options to tweak (click the Apple menu, System Preferences, and HyperDock to bring up the HyperDock preferences menu), allowing you to customize the program's functionality to your heart's content. For example, you can adjust how long it takes the thumbnails to appear when you position the cursor over an icon.

HyperDock is in beta and only available for Mac OS X version 10.6 or higher. For the time being, it's free software. However, when the beta testing is complete, it appears as though you'll have to pay for the program. (It's unclear how much it will cost.)

If you use Mac OS X like me, HyperDock will remove a big thorn from your side. While you still can, download HyperDock free and humbly enjoy it knowing that Microsoft users got to have this functionality first. ■



HyperDock (beta)  
Christian Baumgart  
Free  
[hyperdock.bahoom.de](http://hyperdock.bahoom.de)

# Apple TV

## Looking Inside The Little Black Box



Image courtesy of Apple

**A**pple TV is dead; long live Apple TV. Apple recently released a new version of Apple TV, completely revamping the product. With its features and capabilities, the new Apple TV is effectively a replacement for the old version rather than a simple update.

### What It Is & Isn't

Let's dispel the most common misconception about Apple TV right off the bat: Despite its name, Apple TV is not an actual television. Rather, it's a tiny box that streams audio and video content to your TV. At 0.9 x 3.9 x 3.9 inches (HxWxD), it's 80% smaller than its predecessor, and at \$99, it costs half of what the old Apple TV did.

The primary difference between the new Apple TV and the old is that the more recent version eschews internal storage in favor of a streaming-only model, which contributes largely to the reduction in size of the device. Additionally, to blend in better with

your other home media components, the new Apple TV is black. The device is fanless, so it won't make even a peep to interfere with your viewing experience.

When connected to your existing home network either via Ethernet or over your Wi-Fi, Apple TV can stream content from a variety of sources, including the Internet, and your own computer or iOS device (with a yet-to-be-released technology called AirPlay). Apple TV also gives you a simple, iOS-like interface—that is, a plain black background with mostly tiles to click, albeit with some tweaks—with which to browse, search for, and choose content.

The box has an HDMI (High-Definition Multimedia Interface) port for connecting with your TV, as well as an Ethernet port, an optical audio port, a micro USB port for service, and a built-in IR (infrared) receiver. You also get a slim, sleek aluminum Apple remote, which lets you play, pause, skip forward and backward, and navigate menus.

Like the old Apple TV, the new device supports a maximum video output of 720p, which is high enough quality for most of us, but connoisseurs who demand the highest 1080p quality will be out of luck. (*NOTE: If your TV isn't an HDTV, or if it's an HDTV that isn't 1080p, you won't notice the difference.*)

### TV & Movies

The centerpiece of Apple TV's appeal is the ability to rent TV shows and movies from the iTunes Store. Yes, that's "rent" and not "buy," by dint of the streaming-only design—if you buy a title, you have to download and store it. The idea Apple has here is that, for one thing, managing purchased content requires a large amount of storage capacity. Suppose you decided to watch movies exclusively from your Apple TV for one year; assuming you watch a few movies a month, the storage capacity

required for 30 or so HD movies is fairly large, and that doesn't take into account the dozens of TV shows you'll likely want to watch, too.

Further, managing a lot of purchased content can be ungainly, especially if your iTunes library is suddenly becoming populated by a host of movies and TV shows that you don't really care to watch more than once. True, that documentary on dolphins was an interesting film, but do you really need to see it twice? How about last night's episode of a reality show such as "Hell's Kitchen"? Unless you're a true blue fan of a particular TV series or film, you don't really need to buy; renting is much simpler and cheaper.

If you're the type that likes to collect titles and stash them in your library, you can still buy as many movies and TV shows from iTunes as you like. The only caveat is that to view them on Apple TV, you have to stream them from a computer instead of directly to Apple TV from the iTunes Store.

Renting from the iTunes Store has a few other perks. Nothing is ever out of stock, which is nice, and furthermore, many rentals are available in HD on

problem. iTunes rentals are also entirely commercial-free.

To find movies and TV shows to rent, you can browse Apple TV's selection by title, genre, or most popular shows, and you can also search with keywords. Movies include trailers and ratings from Rotten Tomatoes. TV shows offer episode descriptions and ratings, and Apple TV remembers your favorite shows so the newest episodes are ready for you when you have time to watch.

When you rent a TV show, you can wait up to 30 days before watching it; once you press Play, though, you have the episode for 48 hours. TV shows are in HD and cost 99 cents per episode. Movie rentals, which start at \$2.99 for SD rentals and \$3.99 for HD rentals, are also good for 30 days, but you can only hang onto them for 24 hours after you press Play. In both cases, though, you can watch a title as many times as you want in that 48- or 24-hour period.

### The Web

Although Apple TV runs on a network and makes heavy use of the

Netflix Instant Queue and view suggestions, Recently Watched titles, and New Arrivals or simply search or browse through movie and TV genres. You can also access YouTube, MobileMe, and Flickr, as well as stream Internet radio (by searching through various genres) and play HD podcasts.

### Miscellaneous Goodies

In addition to streaming from Web services and rented content from the iTunes Store, you can stream to Apple TV right from your computer. That means you can stream photo slide-shows and your iTunes music to your TV screen and your home-theater speaker system. Whether you want to play your music over some nice speakers during a party or show photos of the latest big event in your life to friends and family without crowding around your MacBook, the ability to get content stored on your computer to the TV is a terrific feature.

This capability also means that you can stream all the movies and TV shows you've purchased from iTunes to your TV, as well. Effectively, this



The new Apple TV (\$99; [www.apple.com](http://www.apple.com)) is tiny, black, and ready to stream.

the same day they come out on DVD and Blu-ray, which means you can grab the latest big release without fighting for the last copy at a video store or waiting for it to become available on Netflix. You don't even have to get off of the couch to get it. There is no limit to how many titles you can rent, either, so if you have a free day or so for a "Star Wars" marathon, it's no

problem. iTunes rentals are also entirely commercial-free. Therefore, you can't surf the Web for content to stream, but that doesn't mean you don't have access to Web content, because the device has built-in access to several Web sites.

The humdinger of that bunch is the venerable Netflix, which has become a must-have standard for any streaming device. You'll be able to access your

gives you two options for watching movies and TV shows with Apple TV: For the items you want to watch once, you can just rent them for a small fee and be done with it, but if you want to buy certain shows and keep them, you can still stream them over Apple TV.

There are a few other compelling features of Apple TV to consider. One

is that if you want to eschew the included remote control, you can use your iOS device to control Apple TV. The Remote App, free from the App Store, is available for the iPhone, iPad, and iPod touch. You'll be able to navigate to and control playback of content, which will play on your TV when configured with Apple TV.

## AirPlay

An important feature that is coming soon to Apple TV is AirPlay, which will let you stream content from your iPhone, iPod touch, or iPad. You'll be able to start streaming just by playing music, a TV show, or a video on your iOS device, tapping the AirPlay icon, and selecting Apple TV. Just like that, you'll be viewing that content on the big screen, whether it's something from your iTunes library or some home video you shot yourself.

AirPlay is one of those features that is a real pot-sweetener for anyone on the fence about buying an Apple TV. Being able to stream from your computer to your TV is terrific, but as more people gravitate toward using their

## Network Not Included

**F**or all its capabilities, Apple TV still requires an existing network to communicate with your computer, TV, iOS devices, and the Internet. If you don't yet have a wireless network set up in your home, you'll need to subscribe to an Internet provider to get broadband Internet access; this service will also provide a modem. You'll then need to connect a wireless router to the modem and configure your network settings, such as naming your network and creating a password. Once that is set, your Apple TV will be able to join the network.

mobile devices for more tasks, AirPlay will provide a convenient way to share that mobile content on a larger scale.

## Who's It For?

Although Apple TV is a compelling and relatively inexpensive device, it's

not the only option for bringing streamed and purchased content to your TV. For example, Roku (starts at \$59.99; [www.roku.com](http://www.roku.com)), Boxee (free; [www.boxee.tv](http://www.boxee.tv)), and Google TV (prices for devices vary; [www.google.com](http://www.google.com)) all offer similar services.

It's worth mentioning, though, that the usefulness and capabilities of Apple TV will likely increase as more companies such as content providers get on board and develop new apps and allow more content from other sources.

Regardless, you can expect two major benefits from Apple TV right away that are typical of Apple products. One is that the device will be very easy to set up and use (not that the other aforementioned products aren't). The other is that Apple TV will merge seamlessly into your Apple ecosystem; that is, it will work well with your iOS device, Mac computer, and iTunes account, enabling you to take content from all of those sources and view them in one convenient place—your living room TV. ■

BY SETH COLANER

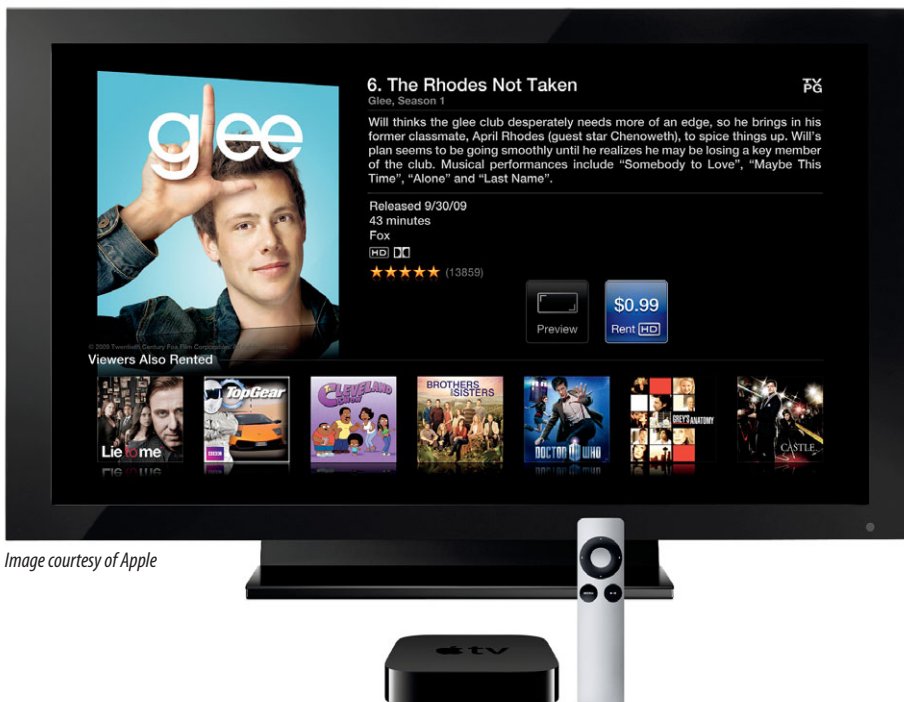


Image courtesy of Apple

Apple TV's interface is clean, intuitive, and reminiscent of an iOS device such as the iPhone.

## Web Tips

# Enhance Your Time Online

### Vegetarian Recipe Search Engine

**Problem:** I'm a vegetarian. Is there a site that compiles vegetarian recipes?

**Solution:** Vegetarian Recipe (www.vegetarianrecipe.us) functions as a search engine by scouring Web pages for vegetarian recipe ingredients. The best way to navigate the site is to type in the combination of ingredients you would like to include in the recipe. The results will include a variety of recipes from sites such as Food.com and Cooks.com. Listed below each result are all of the ingredients in the recipe.

### Collaborate With Co-workers

**Problem:** My employees aren't communicating the way I would like them to. Is there a way to make on-line work communication more efficient?

**Solution:** Users who sign in to Co-op (www.coopapp.com) have the freedom to ask timely questions and share relevant links. You can share the daily agenda with all who need to know, and you can review other co-workers' agendas. Workstream, which displays time entries and team updates for the work log; built-in time tracking, a feature that uses timer Start/Stop buttons to keep of track entries; and Team Status, the virtual "roll call" for a quick

The screenshot shows the memorista.com website. At the top, there's a navigation bar with "Home" and "Italian". Below that is a banner image of a map of Italy. A text box says: "The Card Packs for Italian are listed in the table below. Select what you want to do next by clicking on one of the actions for a Card Pack. (What's a Card Pack?)". Below this is a table:

Card Packs for Italian	Actions (Help)
Accommodation	Learn Test
Basic Expressions	Learn Test
Describing Things	Learn Test
Food And Drink	Learn Test
Numbers And Time	Learn Test
People	Learn Test
Tourism	Learn Test
Travel	Learn Test

On the right side of the page, there's a sidebar with a link to "Learn French for free" and a "Website help" section with links for "First Time Visitors", "Frequently Asked Questions", and "Questions".

Memorista.com gives you the tools to memorize vocabulary in several foreign languages.

glance at everyone's status update, optimize communication in a fast-paced work environment.

### Learn Foreign Vocab

**Problem:** I would like to learn a foreign language on my own, but I need assistance when I memorize vocabulary words.

**Solution:** Give Memorista.com (www.memorista.com) a try. If you learn well using the traditional flash card method, Memorista.com can help you commit to memory phrases and words in particular languages, whether you are brushing up for a trip to Italy, taking German classes as a college student, or challenging yourself for the fun of it. On the home page, you can select the following language options: French, German, Italian, Polish, or Spanish. With each language, you'll get a Card Pack that is

organized into practical categories, such as Basic Expressions, Food And Drink, and Travel. Click a category and then click the number next to the word you would like to memorize. You can start memorizing the word using visual and phonetic memory techniques or mnemonics.

### Give Away Old Things

**Problem:** I would like to give away some old items. Is there an online service that can help me?

**Solution:** Yoink (www.yoink.com) is a free tool that virtually connects one user to another to give away or acquire free items. This map-oriented service lists local Yoink users who have something free to give away; in other words, you can network with Yoink-ers to get and give various merchandise. To get an item (after signing up and logging in), go to the Find

tab and search for an item in a nearby area. Click the item of interest and then click the Yoink button. You'll need to confirm that you can physically pick up the item, so it's wise to search within a radius to which you can easily travel. You can give something away by typing a description of the item in the What Can You Give? box. Next, enter the location in the Where Is It? box and click the Give This Item Now! button to post the item(s) for others to see.

### Share & Enjoy Group Discounts

**Problem:** I want to find great online deals for local businesses, but I don't know where to look.

**Solution:** Groupon (www.groupon.com) is a deal-sharing site that promotes sizeable discounts and encourages you to share them via social networks. Groupon promotes a voucher each day for a business in your city or town; common deals include \$25 vouchers for a \$50 value at a local clothing store, or \$5 toward \$10 dollars worth of Mexican fast food. Clicking the Buy button doesn't automatically guarantee that you get the deal; a minimum number of people must sign up for the deal, so the goal is to invite family and friends to share the Groupon with you. You have 24 hours to purchase the Groupon on the day it's available. For more information about group coupons, see page 50 of the *Smart Computing* October issue. ■

BY JOANNA CLAY

## Plugged In



### Find It Online

Compiled by Joanna Clay

# Celebrate The Holidays In Simplicity

#### Charity Navigator

[www.charitynavigator.org](http://www.charitynavigator.org)

While your heart may be extra ready to give during the holiday season, you might not know where to donate your time or money. Charity Navigator steps in as a mediator by assessing the financial records of more than 5,500 large charity organizations in America. To find a charity, start by either browsing a category or searching with a charity name or keyword. Some of the categories are Animals, Education, Environment, Human Services, and Religion. Click the Tips tab to read some wisdom about giving, such as 6 Questions To Ask Charities Before Donating, Guide To Donating Noncash Items, and Guide To Giving In The Workplace. Once you're a registered user, you can track charities of interest, compare them, or suggest new ones.

#### All Things Frugal

[www.allthingsfrugal.com](http://www.allthingsfrugal.com)

At All Things Frugal, you can read up on thrifty Christmas practices, in addition to other frugal ideas for holiday gifts and decorating. On the main page, click Holidays on the left Menu and then select Christmas. This section highlights a plethora of links to help you be as frugal as you like this holiday season. There are sections dedicated to handling finances around the holidays, outdoor decorating, the Christmas tree, greeting cards, gifts, holiday stress, and more. The Holiday Stress section is especially helpful in regard to coping with the pressures the holidays can bring about.

#### Green Christmas

[www.green-christmas.org](http://www.green-christmas.org)

Eco-savvy Christmas celebrators will appreciate the variety of green-friendly holiday help that's offered at Green Christmas. Though the site's content is relatively limited, you can glean some unique ideas for celebrating the green way. To start, you can help the environment by purchasing toys made of recycled or organic materials, such as tea sets, dolls, and wooden games. Saving gift wrap from the previous Christmas is a great way to recycle and reduce wrapping waste. This site also offers suggestions for eco-friendly baby gifts, corporate gifts, and personalized gifts.

#### Just Christmas

[www.justxmas.com](http://www.justxmas.com)

Simplicity surfaces when we focus on a single idea or action, so why not apply this concept when budgeting and planning for Christmas? Just Christmas has aggregated a large number of holiday resources (all listed on the left sidebar) into easily accessible yet detailed categories. For instance, there are specific categories for DIY Christmas, Homemade Christmas Cards, Homemade Gift Wrap And Trim, and Family Christmas Activities. Each category compiles the appropriate links and

## Share The Wares

*Some of the best apples in the online orchard are the free (or free to try) programs available for download. Each month, we feature highlights from our pickings. This month, we share a holiday download that will help you create the most dazzling Christmas light designs.*

#### Holiday Lights Designer 4.0

[www.holidaysoft.com](http://www.holidaysoft.com)

Decorating your home with Christmas lights can either be a wonderful family activity or a frustrating, backache-provoking task, depending on a lot of

## Plugged In

features descriptive paragraphs about the individual resources. One unique resource is the Victorian Christmas category, which includes a link to DIY Victorian Christmas tree ornaments that you can fashion out of the following items: a juice lid, lace, decorative cord, an old photo, a hot glue gun, a paint pen, and sandpaper.

### Christmas Coupons

[www.christmascoupons.com](http://www.christmascoupons.com)

One of the easiest ways to save your pennies during the holidays is to be an avid coupon collector. For seasonal and daily coupons visit Christmas Coupons. There is an abundance of coupon categories to browse, such as Education Coupons, Green Living Coupons,

Insurance Coupons, Photography Coupons, and Sports & Fitness Coupons. Click the Christmas Deals tab to view a list of discount promotions. When you select the Click To Copy & Shop Deal button, the coupon deal Web site opens in a new tab. Click one of the following to get the latest deals, trending deals, or deals that are about to expire. ■

## That's News To You

*Finding the appropriate online group to match your interests can be a monumental task. So each month, we scour the Internet to bring you the friendliest forums and most interesting bloggers the Web has to offer. This month, we highlight a resource for keeping Christmas organized.*

### Organized Christmas [christmas.organizedhome.com](http://christmas.organizedhome.com)

If you ever get that overwhelming feeling of holiday-induced anxiety around the end of October, take a deep breath, because editor Cynthia Ewer has already organized your holiday schedule for you at Organized Christmas.

Visit the site to find stress-reducing tips and resources, weekly preparation checklists, printable Christmas planners, and homemade gifts in a jar.

Ewer's experience enables her to offer advice about how to have a budget-conscious Christmas.



“Decide what holiday celebrations and traditions mean the most to you and your family and dispense with activities that you’ve done ‘just because’ over the years,” she says. “Renegotiate gift-giving and center giving on consumables.”

Waiting to plan until you have that “Christmas feeling” can hinder your budgeting agenda, according to Ewer. “Overspending on the holidays happens when you allow your emotions, not your brain, to take charge of decision-making—and that’s easy to happen if you wait to ‘think Christmas’ until you feel the holiday spirit.”

factors. One way to eliminate the pressure of planning your Christmas light blueprint is to try Holiday Lights Designer 4.0 from Holidaysoft. This design program gives you the tools to decorate your virtual home before you pull out the ladder and attach lights to the eaves of your front porch.

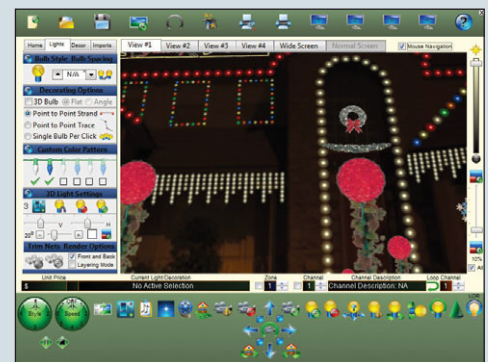
To start, you’ll import an image of the building you’re decorating, and it will appear on the design surface. Use the Door Scaler Image and Scale buttons to size the lights and structure. When you’re ready to add customized lights, click the Lights tab, click Bulb Style, and choose from the following options: C9 bulbs, C7 bulbs, mini-lights, icicle lights, net lights, rope lights, ambient area lights, and

spotlights. What makes Holiday Lights Designer 4.0 worthwhile is its precision in stylistic details, such as the custom pattern light options, 3D view changes, and light movement/rotation settings.

The Decoration Wizard lets you personalize a focus area of your lighting project by taking a snapshot of the region, modifying it as you see fit, and saving it for reuse. For instance, you can zoom in on your front yard and delicately organize a lighting arrangement and save it as an image.

Holiday Lights Designer 4.0 supports Windows 98/Me/2000/NT/XP/Vista/7. You can download a free 30-day trial by clicking

the Download Trial button; a single license is available for \$49.99.



Use Holiday Lights Designer 4.0 to create a virtual blueprint of your home lighting scheme. The software includes lightbulb options, special light adornments, and 3D light settings.

# When The Grapevine Goes Sour

## Protect Your Reputation Online

Use the Web long enough and you're bound to do something regrettable. Maybe it's something provocative you said on Facebook, or a picture floating around that you'd rather keep private, or a massive flame war you engaged in on a forum. Whatever the case, that stuff stays out there for a long time—sometimes forever—and it can come back to haunt you in many ways. Maybe during background checks when you apply for a job. Maybe when it's brought to light by malicious people who mean you harm. You never know when or how your online reputation will be called into question; all you can be sure of is that at some point it will happen, and you need to be prepared.

### Check Your Online Status

The first steps in defending your reputation are looking to see if anything bad is associated with you and locking down as many avenues of attack as possible. Don't wait to hear about someone badmouthing you

from a friend, family member, or client. Search for yourself or your business using a variety of search engines (including Google, Bing, Yahoo!, Ask, and AOL Search) to see what bubbles up to the top of the listings. Start with just your name or your business name, but also search using a variety of common search phrases. Use keywords such as criminal, scam, liar, rip-off, arrested, charged, convicted, addict, etc. Also use your name or your business' name plus your state and your city, along with any other places where you've lived or done business.

Also take advantage of free Web-monitoring tools. Google Alerts (free; [www.google.com/alerts](http://www.google.com/alerts)) provides an

easy way to get alerts whenever new information appears on the Web regarding your name or brand. Trackur ([www.trackur.com](http://www.trackur.com)) has plans starting at \$18 per month, along with a free option (restricted to a single search phrase), that scour the Web searching for mentions of your name and aggregating everything for easy viewing. If you have a business that needs serious monitoring tools, consider Radian6 ([www.radian6.com](http://www.radian6.com)), which starts at \$600 per month but scans more than 150 million blogs, 90 million Tweets, 25,000 online news sites, and thousands of message boards according to their sales literature.

### Be Proactive

There are several things you can do to actively stop negative information from reaching the Web in the first place. Here are some tips.

**Clean up your Web site.** Clarity is especially important for business Web

The screenshot shows the Google Alerts web interface. At the top, there are navigation links for Web, Images, Videos, Maps, News, Shopping, Mail, and more. Below this is the Google Alerts logo and a 'beta' tag. The main section is titled 'Monitor the Web for interesting new content'. It includes a search bar with 'Your Name Here' entered, and a 'Preview results' button. Below the search bar are dropdown menus for 'Type' (set to 'Everything'), 'How often' (set to 'as-it-happens'), 'Volume' (set to 'Only the best results'), and 'Deliver to' (set to 'Feed'). A 'Create Alert' button is at the bottom left. On the right, there is a list of monitored topics with checkboxes and a 'Manage your alerts' link at the bottom.

Google Alerts provides a free, convenient way to track what's being said about you online.

# Plugged In

sites. “For a lot of brands, they tend to hit reputation management problems when they don’t have an easy way for users to go to them for help, or maybe there’s some kind of confusing company policy,” says Rhea Drysdale, COO of Outspoken Media ([www.outspokenmedia.com](http://www.outspokenmedia.com)), which offers a variety of services including online reputation management. Make sure you’re up-front with your customers and provide them with an easy way to vent

Signing up is tedious, but Knowem ([www.knowem.com](http://www.knowem.com)) takes much of the pain out of the process. It lets you search for your name and variations of your name on over 400 social networks at once so you can make sure you don’t miss anything. For a fee, the company also provides a variety of services that automatically register you at these sites.

Also check at Knowem or with a Web registrar such as GoDaddy

(including blog posts, forum posts, and comments).

## Respond When You’re Attacked

If you discover unsavory search results are associated with your name or that someone is actively dragging your name through the mud, there are a number of things you can do to restore your online reputation.

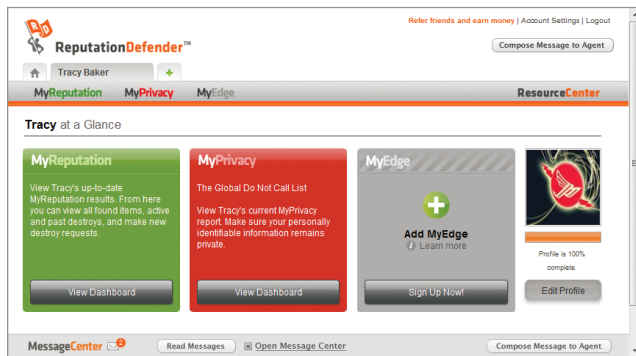
**Make contact.** There’s not much you can do if someone of questionable character shares a name and home town with you, but if you are being specifically targeted, you should immediately contact the Web site where any lies are posted and ask that they be deleted. Most Web sites aren’t interested in becoming a wrestling ring and the administrators will take care of it quickly.

Whatever you do, don’t contact the search engines to get things removed. “Search engines are a reflection of the content and information that is available on the Internet,” says a Google spokesperson. “It’s important to bear in mind that search engines do not have the ability to remove content directly from the Internet, so removing content from Google or another search engine would still leave the original content that exists on the Web.”

**Fight fire with water.** When you can’t get negative comments removed, try to push them deep into the search results by flooding your name or business with positive comments. Create a blog or add content to your Web site that gets you noticed in a positive way. Use the SEO (Search Engine Optimization) tricks discussed in this issue’s feature package beginning on page 48

to help positive search results rise to the top.

**Sleep on it.** One of the Internet’s greatest strengths is the immediacy it provides when we communicate. When someone emails you or posts a



ReputationDefender offers a variety of privacy- and reputation-enhancement services.

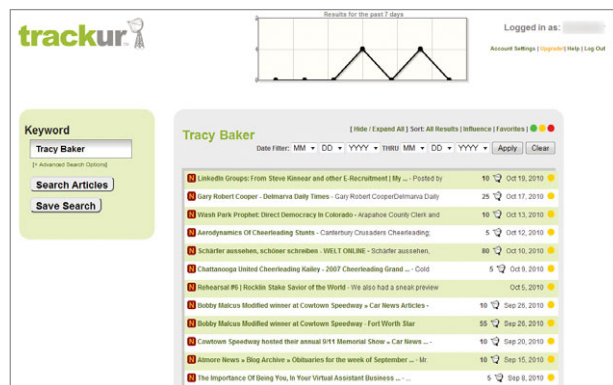
their complaints, and they may not feel compelled to air them online.

**Use aliases.** It’s easy to get sucked into politically charged arguments even at the most benign Web sites. If you use your real name on forums, blog comments, or pretty much anywhere else, consider changing it to an alias to prevent people from easily associating you with the comments you make there. Sometimes this requires creating a new account, but contact the administrator of the site to see if they’ll agree to change your name to an alias.

**Lock down your name.** There’s nothing preventing anyone from using your name or business name to sign up on a social network or other site and begin posting rotten things that you will take the fall for. Sign up at as many sites as possible using your name and any common variants or nicknames even if you don’t plan on using those accounts, just to keep other people from doing the same.

([www.godaddy.com](http://www.godaddy.com)) to see if domain names with your name are available and snap them up even if you have no plans to create a Web site.

**Establish strict posting policies.** If you run a business, it is critical to create a policy that disassociates your



Trackur scours the Internet for all references to any key phrases you enter.

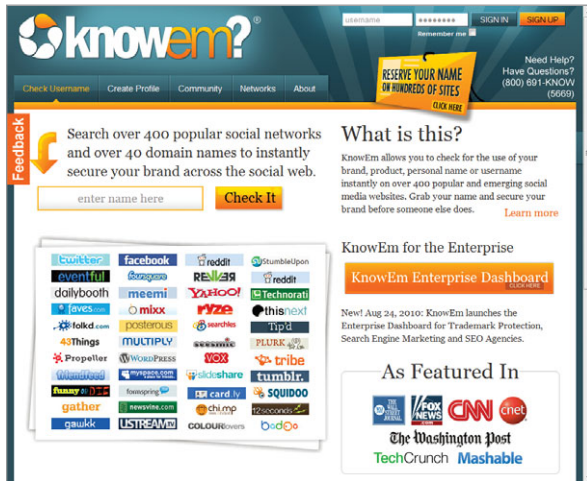
company from your employees when they post things online. Don’t let them include the company name, their company email address, or any other company-related information in any content they put on the Web

## Plugged In

comment on a blog, it appears instantly, and it's easy to get into the mindset that you must respond instantly. Don't.

Write your response, save it, and wait at least a day (or until your rage

or guarantees that their methods will work. "When it comes to search engine optimization or online reputation management, there are no guarantees because we are often dealing with search engines that can



Knowem provides an easy way to lock down your name at a wide variety of social networking and other sites.

dissipates). Read it from the perspective of a friend, family member, colleague, or potential client. If that's not how you want to present yourself to those people, trash your response and start from scratch with a clearer head. Also avoid logical fallacies that hurt your argument. We've listed some of the most common ones in this scenario in the "It's Only Logical" sidebar.

### Hire It Out

If you have a big online reputation problem, your best bet is to let a company handle the cleanup. We already mentioned Outspoken Media, which uses a variety of techniques to monitor and protect online reputations, and ReputationDefender ([www.reputationdefender.com](http://www.reputationdefender.com)) is another popular option. Its MyEdge service (\$99 and up) can do everything from requesting that sites take down negative information about you to using SEO tactics that increase positive search results while making negative search results sink down the list.

If you do outsource your reputation management, be wary of any company that promises quick results

update their algorithms at any time," says Outspoken Media's Drysdale.

If you or your reputation management service is successful in muffling negative search results, don't expect it to happen quickly. "It just totally depends on the situation," says Drysdale. "I worked with one client where we were able to get rid of the negative search result in the top 10 results for their name on Google within 13 days, and that was fantastic, and I've had other clients where it's taken upwards of a year." Michael Fertik, CEO of ReputationDefender, echoes that sentiment. "You can't really do anything within a minute or a day. Normally customers see it within a couple weeks."

When choosing a reputation management service, also beware of companies that use unethical "black hat" tactics to manipulate search results or you may pay them to do more harm than good. "For reputation management, it's mostly the case that you can't get results removed, so instead, you're working to add positive content about you that outranks the negative content about you," says the Google spokesperson. "There's nothing wrong

## It's Only Logical

**W**hen crafting your response to address a falsehood, never make the mistake of falling into logical traps that give your enemy ammunition and make you look foolish or petty. Here are some common mistakes to avoid (or to point out, if your opponent uses them).

**Ad hominem arguments.** These attack your enemy as a person instead of attacking their argument. Leave name-calling to the grade school kids and focus on refuting points instead of personalities.

**Straw man attacks.** When you put words in the mouth of your enemy to make it sound like they're arguing something crazy that you can easily defend, you're creating a straw man. Always respond to what people actually say, not what you wish they had said.

**False dichotomy.** You create a false dichotomy when your argument reduces a range of possibilities down to two. Carefully check arguments that contain either/or and neither/nor to make sure you aren't leaving things out that your opponent can use against you.

with this in and of itself. As far as being within our Webmaster guidelines, it's the same as any other Web content. If you use spammy and manipulative techniques to get this positive content to rank highly, we may take action on it. But there's no problem in creating positive content to combat negative content if done within the guidelines."

As with SEO, the best way to salvage your online reputation is to focus on the positive instead of obsessing over the negative. Good will triumph over evil. ■

BY TRACY BAKER

# Best Of The Web 2010

by Richard Sherman

It's that magical time of year when sleigh bells are ringing, carolers are singing, reindeer are clattering—my gosh, how does anybody get any sleep around here? Sleep deprivation notwithstanding, it's time once again for my annual “Best Of The Web” extravaganza. Each year, I review and profile hundreds of Web sites—and yes, it is a real job, but thanks for asking. From this eclectic collection, I have selected a column's worth of this year's most interesting, helpful, noteworthy, or just plain bizarre Web sites. In keeping with the spirit of the holidays, I herewith present them as my humble gift to you. (Sorry, no returns.)

**Happy News** ([www.happynews.com](http://www.happynews.com)). Between network and cable news, talk radio, newspapers, online news sources, and 24/7 in-your-face, late-breaking bulletins, many people feel under siege. When the meds just aren't cutting it, scroll on over to one of the happiest places on the Web. Spend a few minutes here each day to lift your spirits and maybe even gain a sliver of inspiration or hope for the future. Okay, maybe that's stretching it, but it's still a warm and fuzzy place to park your mouse.

**Answers.com** ([www.answers.com](http://www.answers.com)). A free reference guide that provides fast answers to specific questions covering millions of topics.

**Book of Odds** ([www.bookofodds.com](http://www.bookofodds.com)). Intriguing data ranging from the odds of becoming a YouTube celebrity, to the odds that you'll wind up bitter, alone, and sitting around in a bathrobe all day writing magazine columns. (Hey, wait a minute!)

**ElderTreks** ([www.eldertreks.com](http://www.eldertreks.com)). Exotic adventures to off-the-beaten-path destinations created exclusively for age 50+ travelers. Select your tour by price and activity level, ranging from “Gentle” to “You-want-me-to-climb-what?”

**Medical Assistance** ([www.medhelp.org](http://www.medhelp.org)). More than 10 million people each month find answers to their medical questions at this site, created to connect people with leading medical experts. Perhaps they are unaware of the healing powers of chicken soup.

**Mind Games** ([playwithyourmind.com](http://playwithyourmind.com)). More than 100 word games, card games, typing games, memory games, math games, and logic puzzles, all designed to challenge your mind. May cause cerebral cramping.

**Optical Illusions** ([www.michaelbach.de/ot](http://www.michaelbach.de/ot)). Presents and analyzes optical illusions from a scientific perspective,

as opposed to my less sophisticated “Lookie, lookie! Ain't that something?” approach.

**Radio Lovers** ([www.radiolovers.com](http://www.radiolovers.com)). Close your eyes and transport yourself back to a kinder, gentler era when radio was king. Here you can listen to hundreds of wonderful old radio broadcasts featuring Groucho Marx, Blondie, Bob Hope, and many, many more.

**Time-Warp** ([www.time-warp.org](http://www.time-warp.org)).

Take a leisurely scroll through the years and learn about the technology that evolved during each era. Peruse pictures of then-new technologies such as reel-to-reel tape recorders, record players, manual typewriters, desktop calculators, and color television. (Sigh.)

**TryPhone** ([tinyurl.com/287slgc](http://tinyurl.com/287slgc)). Use these interactive online virtual handsets to test-drive mobile devices, cell phones, applications, content, and services or watch demonstrations. Try it, then possibly buy it.

**Wi-Fi Finder** ([tinyurl.com/cqsek5](http://tinyurl.com/cqsek5)). If you're in dire need of a wireless hotspot, here you will find more than 338,000 of them, in 144 countries. Click the map and drill down to a location or search by address, location type, proximity, or free or paid access. Bookmark this one if you're frequently on the move or on the lam.

**Wimp** ([wimp.com](http://wimp.com)). The best G-rated, family-oriented videos on the Web. The site is updated each day with five new videos, so there is always something new to view, and you don't have to worry about your kids viewing something that would make you swoon, gasp, or collapse in a heap.

**You Were How Old When?** ([tinyurl.com/1z4v](http://tinyurl.com/1z4v)). Enter your birth date to see how old you were when a variety of historical events occurred and how much older or younger you are than other individuals. I can't decide if this is entertaining and informative or simply depressing.

On behalf of Mrs. Modem, Willy, Nilly, Bertie, and Lilly, we wish you a happy holiday season, and I look forward to meeting you back here next month, as we careen headlong into 2011! ■



**Mr. Modem (Richard Sherman)** is an author, syndicated columnist, radio host, and publisher. “Mr. Modem's Weekly Newsletter” provides personal responses to subscribers' computer and Internet questions, plus weekly computing tips, Web site recommendations, virus alerts, hoax warnings, and more. For additional information, visit [www.MrModem.com](http://www.MrModem.com).

## **How Search Engines Work**

THE MECHANICS BEHIND THE RESULTS - 50

## **DIY Search Engine Optimization**

GET YOUR SITE NOTICED FOR THE RIGHT REASONS - 52

## **Hire A Search Engine Optimizer**

TIME TO CALL IN THE PROS - 55



It's not enough that your business has a Web site. To be successful, the site must get noticed, including by search engines. Take, for example, this scenario: John Doe buys a new house and wants to install an underground sprinkler system, something your company does.

Not sure who the local installers are, he searches Google for "sprinkler installation" and receives numerous pages of results. Rather than appearing on page one or two, however, your company's Web site is buried on page six—the Siberia of search engine results. Chances are John Doe never looks past page three before settling on prospects, and your company loses potential business.

If you're uncertain why your site is on page six vs. page one, you're probably not versed in SEO (search engine optimization). If so, it's likely your site isn't optimized to Google, Bing, Yahoo!, and other search engines, or it's so poorly optimized, the search engines don't consider the site relevant enough to list higher in their results. Want to reach John Doe? You need to make your site friendlier to search engines, which is what SEO is all about. The following articles will guide the way by detailing how search engines work (see "How Search Engines Work"; page 50), how to optimize your own site (see "DIY Search Engine Optimization"; page 52), and why to consider a professional service (see "Hire A Search Engine Optimizer"; page 55).

## The Art Of SEO

If you're new to SEO, you'll soon discover it's a world with its own language, culture, and diverse user set. It's also a world awash in information and resources that can be simultaneously helpful, conflicting, and overwhelming. The one constant, however, is that everyone is aiming to optimize his site to get search engines to take a longer look and thus make the site more accessible to users.

Understanding SEO means understanding how search engines compile the results they funnel to users. In turn, you'll understand why optimization is so important. In fact, search engines not only recognize SEO as acceptable, but

they also offer their own advice. Google, for example, provides a primer ([tinyurl.com/ouqpx](http://tinyurl.com/ouqpx)) and "Search Engine Optimization Starter Guide" ([tinyurl.com/yz64bbo](http://tinyurl.com/yz64bbo)), while Bing provides a Toolbox ([www.bing.com/toolbox/default.aspx](http://www.bing.com/toolbox/default.aspx)) for developers, among other sources.

Do enough SEO research and common themes begin to emerge of what to do (make content easily accessible, master keyword usage, acquire reputable links to your site, construct effective title tags and a meta description, etc.) and what not to do (use hidden text and links, redirect visitors, use cloaking techniques, misuse keywords, etc.). Still, mastering SEO is a sizable task, and it can take time to see results, a luxury a small-business owner may not have if she's also handling CEO, marketing, and support duties. This is where hiring a professional can make sense.

## Buyer Beware

Because SEO boils down to manipulating Web sites to make them more attractive to search engines, the practice is seen in a negative light in some circles. The fact that there are "black hat" optimizers who use questionable tactics doesn't help. When considering a professional SEO service, you unfortunately may need to discern if it's legitimate or out to scam you by redirecting your site's visitors to other client sites (including spam-ridden ones); using cloaking, hidden links, irrelevant keywords, and other techniques to trick search engines; or even guaranteeing a top search engine ranking—something Google states is impossible. Ultimately, a search engine detecting such tactics may ban your site. To find reputable services, ask prospects for references and previous examples of work and ask fellow business owners for their recommendations.

Unfortunately, having a great-looking Web site jammed with great content won't equate to increased business if customers never see it. By optimizing your site, search engines will take notice, push your search engine ranking up, increase site traffic, and bring your business several steps closer to potential customers. ■

BY BLAINE FLAMIG

# How Search Engines Work

## The Mechanics Behind The Results

**W**hen you're looking for something new on the Internet, a search engine is typically your first stop. We all know how to use a search engine: Just type a word, a phrase, or the name of a person or place and then click the Search button to see hundreds of thousands of links to relevant Web pages. But there's a lot that goes on behind the scenes to make sure the Google bots, Bing machines, and Yahoo! droids put what you're looking for at the top of the results page. Search engines make it their business to read your mind, and you might be surprised by some of their methods.

### The Specifics Of Search

Search engines, such as Bing and Google, are composed of multiple parts. The aspect you interact with to type in your queries and navigate results is little more than a front-end user interface, much like your Desktop is for your PC's operating system. Behind that user interface, **Web crawlers**, or single-purpose applications that fetch data from the Web, compile a database of documents by requesting

specific pages from Web servers all over the Internet, scanning each page for hyperlinks, and then categorizing the results using a numbering system. Speed is a high priority for search engines, so Web crawlers tend to

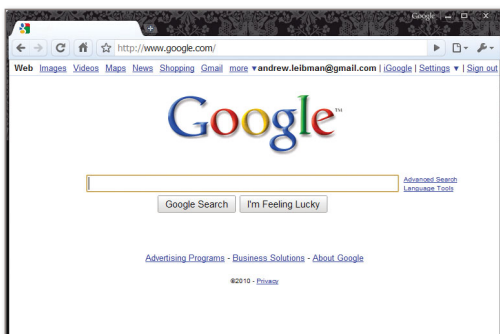
start by indexing the most popular Web pages first, scouring the most active servers and following every link on those pages. The Web search indexes behind search engines use a variety of **encoding** (converting data from one form into another) and **hashing** (converting words

and characters into an abbreviated alphanumeric value) techniques to translate all the words and links returned by Web crawlers into an efficient and fast database that is capable of returning a page of hits in fractions of a second.

Web crawlers are capable of producing incredible volumes of data in a very short period. According to our Google industry source, "A lot of Web sites, we can index in a second or less." But this collection of incomprehensible gobbledygook isn't searchable until it's paired with an index, which singles out words so that when you perform your search, any page that contains words that match your query has the possibility of showing up in your results list. But your Web search doesn't stop there.

### The Secret Search Sauce

Every search engine has its own bag of tricks for ranking search results and displaying them in order of relevance. The specifics of these ranking techniques are closely guarded trade secrets, and to give you an idea how important ranking is, Google tells us that there are more engineers working on search than on any other product at Google. Google's PageRank is a fairly well-known relevancy algorithm, which helps rank pages



Minimalism defines Google's search front end.

based on how many links there are to a Web page from other pages, and the linking Web site's quality (based on things such as the site's reliability and the amount of time the site has been on the Web). In this way, PageRank looks at the Web like it's a popularity contest, and when a popular site mentions another site, it carries a lot of weight with the PageRank algorithm. It's all about the Web sites you know.

Another type of algorithm takes note of where in the Web page a given word is found. Most algorithms weigh any words found in the title, subtitles, metatags (typically the Web designer or Web page owner's details about the contents of the page), and other descriptive locations more heavily. Sometimes, an algorithm purposefully omits words from an index, such as "a," "an," and "the." Capitalization and font size are other common factors that can affect how much weight a word might get in an index. These algorithms are the hearts and souls of a search engine, and the better they are at determining what can be found on a given Web page, the better a user's search results will be. But showing a simple collection of links is not all a modern search engine is capable of doing.

### Make The Most Of Your Results

Although Microsoft, Yahoo!, and Google are not willing to reveal the nuts and bolts of their ranking techniques, Google was a lot more forthcoming about how it arrives at some of the more transparent results you encounter. For instance, when you type **weather** into a search engine and press ENTER, you'll typically see the weather for your area. At Google, they call this a Universal Search Result. Context plays a large role in the results of your search. For instance, where you are, what the date is, and what is going on in your neck of the woods all affect your results. In this way, a search you perform today will likely return different results than if you make the same search

two weeks from now. And search providers are constantly refining their relevancy formulas and evolving the search engines to help you find exactly what you're looking for.

Search is an evolving organism. A senior software engineer who works on Web search quality at Google tells us that "at any given time, we're running between 50 and 200 search experiments, meaning that we're trying out a tweak to the ranking algorithm or to the appearance of the results, and we're testing the data to see if users are clicking in ways that suggest to us that it is an im-

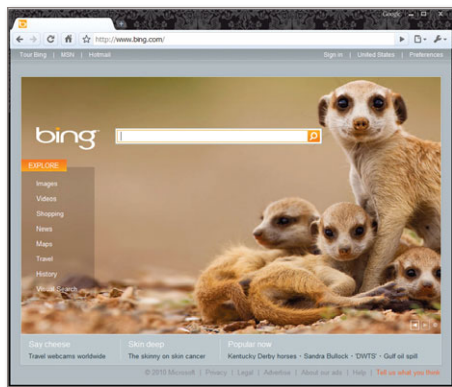
provement." In essence, there are between 50 and 200 versions of Google Search at any given moment; some differ in only minor ways, such as displaying a keyword in bold, indenting a line of text, or changing the ranking of a certain category of queries. Other changes are more dramatic, such as changing the index so that the search engine can return results for queries typed as full sentences. In 2009 alone, Google launched

550 different improvements to its search engine.

### Search Seers

Google acknowledges that some searches are easier than others. The searches that are more difficult to produce relevant results on are the completely unique ones. According to Google, the firm's search engine gets more than 1 billion searches every day. Of those searches, 20% of them haven't been searched for in the previous 90 days. To a search engine, that's the equivalent of an alien language. And trying to anticipate those sorts of queries is the equivalent of trying to learn to speak that language before you've heard syllable one. "That introduces some interesting challenges, because if you don't know what people are going to be searching for tomorrow, you have to kinda guess. It's something we spend a lot of time trying to figure out." ■

BY ANDREW LEIBMAN



Bing's search interface is a bit more colorful, but no-nonsense nonetheless.

# DIY Search Engine Optimization

## Get Your Site Noticed For The Right Reasons

**T**ype something related to your business into Google. Anything. Now look under the Search box at the number of results that are returned. That's what you are up against when a potential customer starts looking for your company's products and services.

The solution is SEO, short for search engine optimization. This uses a combination of techniques to make your site easier for search engines to index while proving to them that your site has relevant enough content to rank highly in search results.

### Keep It Simple

All of the experts we talked to agreed that the main thing Web developers should focus on in terms of SEO is making the site easy for search engine robots to navigate, called crawlability. "Far too often, we use technologies, internal link structures, and other hurdles that do not allow the search robots from Bing, Baidu, Google, etc., to index our sites completely and accurately," says Avinash Kaushik, co-founder of Market Motive (www.mar

ketmotive.com) and analytics analyst for Google. When creating or outsourcing a Web site, be sure to keep your site's structure as clean and well-labeled as possible. Give each page URL a meaningful name, don't include stray pages that aren't connected to a parent page, and label all images and video with descriptive captions that the search engine robots can read (images and video are invisible to them).

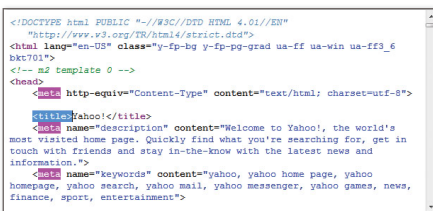
Many Web site creation tools have plug-ins or other tools that simplify SEO. For example, if

you use the popular WordPress site creation software (free; [www.wordpress.org](http://www.wordpress.org)), you can install tools such as the All In One SEO Pack (free; [tinyurl.com/6ljywp](http://tinyurl.com/6ljywp)) to easily handle many SEO-related chores. All Web site operators should also sign up for Google Webmaster Tools (free; [www.google.com/webmasters/tools](http://www.google.com/webmasters/tools)), which provide a wealth of SEO-related info.

### Keywords Are Key

The goal of a search engine is to provide results that are as relevant as possible to the search terms entered. As a business owner, that means it is your job to anticipate what search terms a potential customer might use and tailor your site's content to match up with those search terms. If the search engine sees that your site contains keywords that match up perfectly with search terms, it will sense a good match exists between your site and the searcher and raise your site's ranking on the search results list accordingly.

There's no magic formula for coming up with good keywords, other than putting yourself in customers' shoes and thinking about what items or benefits they seek that your business can



Get your meta and title tags done properly, and half the SEO (search engine optimization) battle is won.

supply. Keywords should be as specific as possible; focus on two- or three-word phrases that define your business.

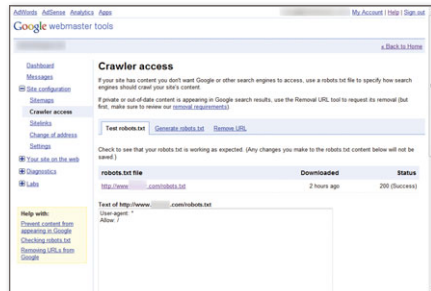
Another tip is to check competitors' Web sites to see what keywords they use. Load up any page in Internet Explorer, right-click it, and click View Source. In Firefox, right-click a Web page and click View Page Source. Look at the <title>, meta name="description," and meta name="keywords" tags (discussed later) to see if you find anything useful.

## Content Is King

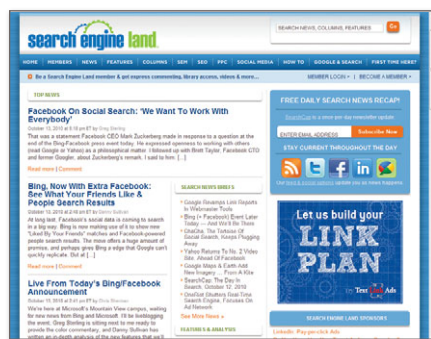
Once you've come up with a killer set of keywords, the temptation to pack them all into every page of your Web site is great, but that strategy is bound to backfire. Search engines are good at evaluating the importance of keywords, and using keywords over and over again raises a red flag to the search algorithm. As a rule of thumb, if your content reads well to a human, it will rank higher in the search results.

## Meta Keywords

Once upon a time, the meta name="keywords" section of a Web page was used to place descriptive terms about the site's content that a search engine could use to categorize and help



Google Webmaster Tools are free and invaluable for SEO.



Search Engine Land is a terrific way to keep up on the latest SEO news.

rank a site for relevance. Then unscrupulous Web developers abused the feature, packing the section with so many keywords that the entire section became worthless for search engine ranking. "The meta keywords feature does nothing," says Eric Enge, president of Stone Temple Consulting (www.stonetemple.com) and co-author of "The Art of SEO." "Don't pay any attention to [the meta keywords feature], or if you insist on paying attention to it, spend 15 seconds and put in a couple words related to the page."

## Title Tags

The <title> tag has a dramatic impact on search rankings. "You want to take the major keyword that relates to each page and make sure it's right at the very start of the title tag," says Enge. "If you want to put your company name or your name or whatever it is in there, do that at the end rather than at the beginning." Search algorithms, like humans, are designed to treat information at the beginning of a sentence as having more importance than the information at the end, so instead of using a title tag such as "XYZ Inc. Widgets" use "Widgets at XYZ Inc."

Many times, site visitors come in from the "sides" of the site instead of through the home page, so be sure to create unique title tags for every single page. "You should never duplicate a

## SEO No-Nos

One thing all search engines have in common is that they despise Web developers who try to game the ranking system. Here are some outdated or unethical tactics to avoid.

- Don't outsource your SEO to any consultant or company that guarantees a particular ranking.
- Don't pack a ton of keywords into meta tags or other site content.
- Don't use hidden text to put more keywords in your site.
- Don't swap links just for the sake of swapping links.
- Don't create a lot of small sites that exist only to link to your main site.
- Don't spam blog or news comments with your site URL.

## START A WEB SITE FROM SCRATCH: SEO To-Dos

Search algorithms at the major search providers constantly evolve and make SEO a tricky proposition, but there are still several things you can do to make your site more visible to them and improve its search rankings.

- Make your site structure simple and easy for robots to crawl through.
- Develop a list of specific keywords relevant to your site.
- Use unique title tags for every page.
- Write a compelling meta description.
- Label and add captions for all images and video.
- Don't save text as images.
- Use headings, boldface type, and italics to call out important keywords, but be careful not to go overboard.
- Choose a site title (and URL, if possible) that contains your most important keyword.
- Use all of the SEO and Webmaster tools Google offers.

## SEO LIBRARY

This article covers only the barest essentials of orienting a Web site toward SEO. If you're really serious about driving more business to your site without running afoul of the search engines, be sure to check out everything on this list.

**Google SEO Starter Guide**

[tinyurl.com/324gth2](http://tinyurl.com/324gth2)

Practical SEO is all about playing by the rules, and this is Google's rule book.

**Bing Toolbox**

[www.bing.com/toolbox/webmasters](http://www.bing.com/toolbox/webmasters)

The Bing Toolbox includes many handy links to more information about crafting a Bing-friendly Web site.

**Search Engine Land**

[www.searchengineland.com](http://www.searchengineland.com)

This is your go-to blog for SEO-related news and expert commentary.

**Matt Cutts Blog**

[www.mattcutts.com/blog](http://www.mattcutts.com/blog)

Matt Cutts is a Google search engineer who posts useful stuff for Web developers in the Google/SEO section of his personal blog.

**Occam's Razor by Avinash Kaushik**

[www.kaushik.net/avinash](http://www.kaushik.net/avinash)

Avinash Kaushik is a leading expert on Web analytics who offers a sensible, scientific perspective to SEO.

**Rambling About SEO**

[www.stonetemple.com/blog](http://www.stonetemple.com/blog)

Eric Enge is a respected SEO consultant and co-authored one of the bibles of SEO called "The Art of SEO."

title tag," says Enge. "Even if the differences between the pages are small, you should highlight what those differences are."

**Meta Description**

This area of the page contains a brief overview of your site—just a sentence or two. It shows up only for search engines crawling your site; visitors don't see the text. "It doesn't affect ranking," says Enge, "but it's very useful, because when the search engine shows your page in the results, it picks the description from somewhere. It becomes a chance for you to sell the content of your page." Often the text you see in an automatically generated search result comes directly from the site's meta description, so be sure to put a succinct advertising message there that will draw people's attention to your entry and make them click it.

**Forging Links**

Arguably the most important optimization of all—and unfortunately the one you have the least control over—is building a link network by getting other sites to provide links back to your site. "The links are the critical part," says Enge. "They're like votes in an election, essentially." Unlike an election, however, "not all links are created equal. One link might be worth up to 100,000 times more than another."

Separating the good links from the bad is easy. Once again, put yourself in the shoes of potential

customers. Do you think they'll care more about a link to your site from a respected reviewer, or one in the comments section of a blog that was obviously planted there by one of your employees? Links, like people, have variable amounts of credibility, and both customers and search engines weigh that credibility heavily when determining the relevance of your Web site.

The best way to generate valuable links is to create unique, fresh content that other people want to read and quote. You can also send product samples or offer free registrations to established bloggers for review, or write for trade publications or blogs that will link to your site at the end of your articles.

Going local also helps. Contact relevant local businesses and organizations such as the chamber of commerce to see if it's interested in doing a link swap (you link to them and they link to you), but don't make the common mistake of taking this too far. If search engines see you're swapping links with everyone on the planet, your search rankings will suffer.

**Stay Informed**

Because SEO is a moving target, it pays to keep up with the latest trends and update your Web site accordingly. Be sure to read the resources listed in the "SEO Library" sidebar frequently for the latest news and tips. That said, never lose sight of the fact that content is king. "What does not change over time is having great relevant content on your site, having clean URL structures, ensuring all the tags are in place, creating useful navigation elements, writing lots of new and great content in the language of users, linking to other valuable sources (as sensible), and getting links from other valuable sources (as relevant)," says Kaushik. "So focus on that. Let the search engines do what they do best." ■

BY TRACY BAKER

# DIY SEO

# Hire A Search Engine Optimizer

## Time To Call In The Pros



**Y**ou've read the search engine's documentation until your eyeballs ache. You've flipped through the "Dummies" books and read every search optimization blog in sight. What happens if . . . *nothing* happens? You have a business to build, and the weeks are ticking by. You need Web traffic ASAP.

Could it be time to call in the professionals? We conducted a Google search and tried to contact almost two dozen SEO (search engine optimization) services. The number of faulty voicemail systems and unreturned emails we encountered was startling. Clearly, the field is full of fly-by-nights whose search rankings bear little relationship to their true business presence. How do you separate the wheat from the chaff, and what will a real SEO company do that you couldn't manage on your own?

### Know What You're Getting

It's not enough to target great search results. You need to know how those search results get generated and whether the results are sustainable over the long term. You also need to understand the difference between a paid vs. organic search campaign. The best-known example of a paid campaign is Google AdWords, which generates PPC (pay-per-click) advertising. Your company only pays when people click your ads (which appear next to Google search results). This is very different from organic search results, which rank within search results according to relevance and other factors determined by the search engine.

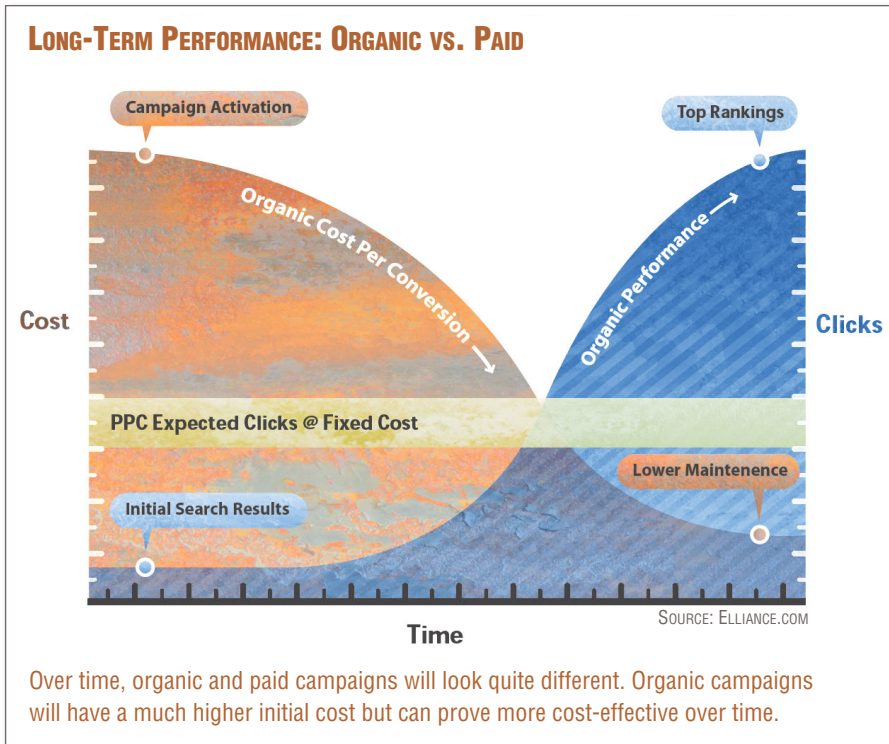
When starting a search for SEO help, it's natural to go to your favorite search engine and type in "SEO professional" or something similar. Mark Jackson, CEO of SEO agency Vizion Interactive ([www.vizioninteractive.com](http://www.vizioninteractive.com)), cautions that this

approach can deliver misleading hits, such as sites that claim to list the top SEOs.

"These sites list, supposedly, the top SEO firms in the world, but they're paid advertisements," says Jackson. "That's indicative of our industry. There are a lot of people who drop a lot of buzzwords to make you believe they know SEO . . . but they don't."

Jackson notes that business managers tend to suspend their normal due diligence when doing SEO hiring. They cut checks first and ask questions later. The traditional interview process used when hiring an employee, including calling references for verification, seems to vanish.

"People want someone to come in, sprinkle some SEO pixie dust, and get instant rankings," he says. "But it doesn't work like that. There are very few instances where you can make a change and see quick, measured results. You might be looking at three, even six months or longer before



make sure you have a real professional with resources and a skilled team. A proper SEO professional should start taking action on several points even before beginning the main optimization work.

“The SEO [professional] should do a project feasibility study to determine if there is a reasonable probability of success,” says SEO veteran consultant Bruce Clay ([www.bruceclay.com](http://www.bruceclay.com)). “Often, the prospect does not have a reasonable expectation for what can be achieved and how quickly. Some SEO [professionals] will simply take the client’s money regardless of success, but the ethical SEO [expert] will tell it as it is.”

Most small and midsize businesses find that giving hired SEO professionals FTP (File Transfer Protocol) or similar access to their Web servers is inevitable, although, this could be done indirectly through a regular IT staff intermediary. Such access needs to be legally structured and enforced with consequences in the event of site damage or breaking of nondisclosure. But site changes must be done, and it’s the SEO who’s being paid to do them. Changes can include altering the navigation structure and title tags and implementing a blog on your domain. A total site redesign may even be needed. For example, if a site is predominantly graphical, it may need to be balanced with some text.

SEO experts will almost never reveal their “secret sauce” in what they do—as a partly intuitive process, some may not even be able to articulate it—but all professionals should freely discuss their methodologies. Reda Yamani, a senior SEM (search engine marketing) specialist with SEO 1 Services ([www.seo-1-marketing-services.com](http://www.seo-1-marketing-services.com)), was willing to share some about his company’s SEO process.

“Our SEO methods consist [of] a two-step process. On-page optimization consists [of] going through a Web page and changing its contents to increase thematic relevance, removing any code ‘road blocks,’ and increasing the ‘spiderability’ of the site. Off-page optimization, or link popularity, consists of the number of high-quality, relevant inbound links. Google puts a lot

you see real results, and during that time, you’re paying that SEO firm their monthly retainer.”

Presumably, you want an SEO specialist with the same ethics you use in your own company. “Black hat” or “gray hat” SEO involves tactics such as keyword stuffing and creating doorway pages, which are Web pages never meant for public viewing and which exist only to be indexed by search engines in order to inflate the site’s search rankings. Black hat techniques can lift search rankings, but they can also backfire and get a site banned from search engines. When shopping for an SEO expert, make sure that he or she adheres to an SEO code of ethics. This code can vary among providers, but any SEO professional should be aware of and adhere to a conduct code that looks similar to the one found here: [goo.gl/DVaq](http://goo.gl/DVaq).

White hat techniques follow Google’s on-page optimization quality guidelines (see [goo.gl/tKyl](http://goo.gl/tKyl)). Confirm with prospective SEO pros that they adhere to these practices before you hire them; then do spot checks on their work over the following weeks of development to make sure they’re not straying from the guidelines.

## What Will Happen?

Naturally, inviting anyone to poke around inside your site and make changes to it can be a harrowing experience. This is where it pays to

of emphasis on your Internet popularity by regarding a link to your site as a vote. We create thematic link building by generating content that is appealing to Web publishers and that uses the latest syndication technologies to create a viral marketing effect," says Yamani.

Midrange SEOs tend to promote their packages, such as "gold" or "platinum" plan bundles. These are template-driven and offer little to no customization. According to Bruce Clay, clients "should not be surprised to find that their site does well but never quite breaks into the top 10" search results. Always ask prospective SEO specialists how they will tailor their campaigns specifically for your goals.

## Set Realistic Expectations

Anyone who hires SEO talent hopes for ranking miracles. In reality, says William Smith, a former director of search marketing at ad agency Off Madison Ave. ([www.offmadisonave.com](http://www.offmadisonave.com)), there are thousands of factors that go into where a page ranks, most of which are beyond anyone's control. "The best way to achieve search rankings, in my experience, is to focus on providing relevant content and making sure the fundamentals of your Web site design are sound. If you lack content in the first place, no amount of SEO will help you achieve rankings," says Smith.

But assuming you've hired a professional with a solid SEO game plan who has pushed you into producing the right online content, then what? How do you *know* if you're getting results?

SEO 1 Services' Yamani believes benchmarks and goals must be estab-

lished from the outset, including higher conversion rates, newsletter signups, lower bounce rates, and higher retention time on sites. Unscrupulous SEO specialists will sell prospects an irresistible deal, but a professional will adjust a campaign based on your resources and use benchmarks to establish realistic goals as part of a growth strategy.

"Most companies who consider SEO fail due to inadequate expectations in the decision-making process," says Yamani. "You can't just 'negotiate' with a search engine optimization company on the number of keywords as a measure of value. SEO is a marathon and not a sprint. Results are incremental and exponential in nature. It may take from six to 12 months to reach those top rankings depending on the competition."

## Pricing

Professional SEO services are not cheap, but, done well, the ROI (return on investment) may beat spending \$100,000 per year on a brick-and-mortar mall presence or TV commercials. Vizion Interactive averages about \$6,000 per month for an SEO campaign. SEO 1 Services notes \$1,000 to \$5,000 per month—or more in highly competitive fields.

If an SEO consultant is going to show your staff what he or she does and teach methods along the way, expect that training to double your rates, says Bruce Clay. Still, that may be money well-spent over the long haul, especially if your initial SEO plan was to handle optimization in-house without increasing staff. ■

BY WILLIAM VAN WINKLE

## How Do You Spot A Scam?

We ran this question past our experts. Be sure to keep their answers in mind before you commit to any purported SEO professional.

**1.** Beware of promises for "guaranteed" traffic or "top placement." All experts agree: There is no way to guarantee traffic results. Search engine algorithms change, and there's no way to control how competing sites are being optimized.

**2.** "Who has the best reputation?" asks Bruce Clay ([www.bruceclay.com](http://www.bruceclay.com)). "Who wrote a book, speaks at conferences, has a good, solid reputation, is on the board of industry organizations, and openly supports ethical behavior? Good guys are easy to spot, and spammers not so easy."

**3.** People who don't know what they're talking about will tell you things such as how they submit to search engines. This antiquated process is no longer relevant and is a giveaway that the SEO provider's service is questionable.

**4.** SEO consultants will point to sites that they've "helped," but they won't offer specifics on what they changed, how they changed the site, or contacts that can vouch for their efforts.

**5.** "Beware if the company has no significant top rankings nationally or in a geo-targeted area," says Reda Yamani of SEO 1 Services ([www.seo-1-marketing-services.com](http://www.seo-1-marketing-services.com)). "After all, if they are in the SEO arena, they should deliver results to their own site."

**6.** Scammers often provide a template-oriented, cookie-cutter approach to SEO. One size does not fit all. An SEO campaign should always be customized to a company's size, budget, industry competitiveness, and similar factors.

**7.** It's a red flag if the so-called consultant does not really have a personal story related to SEO, according to Yamani. "This question will reveal whether the person is a consultant or a scripted salesman," he says.

# SEO PRO

# Roxio Creator 2010

## Make Holiday Cards & Tags

Digital Media  
Suite

Beginner

WinXP/Vista/7

**H**omemade gifts add a personal touch to your gift giving and help you stay within your holiday budget. That creativity doesn't have to stop with the present itself, either. Add more individuality by designing and producing your own holiday cards and gift tags with Roxio Creator 2010.

Both projects we're about to tackle are located in the Photo tab of the Creator 2010 Home page. Click the Create Projects icon or the Create Projects link to launch the Photo Projects Assistant.

### Holiday Cards

Roxio offers roughly six dozen templates, from birthday to sports to travel themes. In this example, we'll be creating a winter solstice card. (Keep in mind that most of the cards let you customize the text as well as the photo. When choosing a layout, consider the printed images that you can't modify instead of the sample text that you can.)

On the first page of the Photo Projects Assistant, select Cards from the list of items in the left pane. Then, select the desired template from the right pane. In this case, we'll choose the Snowman template. Click Next.

In the workspace on the right, double-click the photo in the card. This action opens the Replace Placeholder dialog box. Browse the photos on your hard drive and select the one

you'd like to insert into the card. Click Open to insert the photo.

Next, it's on to changing the text. The snowman is holding a sign that says Season's Greetings, and we'll change this to reflect the particular season we're celebrating. Click the sign to activate the text box, and in the software's left pane, replace the text with your own message. To change the font, type size, or other features, use the tools at the top of the workspace. You can also drag and drop the text box to place it exactly where you want.

This particular template also gives you the ability to customize text on the inside of the card.

(This feature varies by card, so be sure to look at the bottom of the workspace to determine your options.) Click the button labeled Inside Right and click the text box. Again, use the text box in the left pane to customize the text. When finished, click Next.

You're now on the final step of the project. Click Save and save the project in the DMSP format; this allows you to continue editing the project in the future. Lastly, click the Print button.

Printing is the trickiest step of the entire project. It isn't complicated in itself, but it may take some trial and error to get the layout correct. In the Settings pane, choose the paper size and orientation, how many items to print on one page, and other options. If you're using card stock, we recommend you print a test sheet on a standard sheet of paper to make sure the card displays the way you want. Finally, fold and cut the cards, if necessary.

### Gift Tags

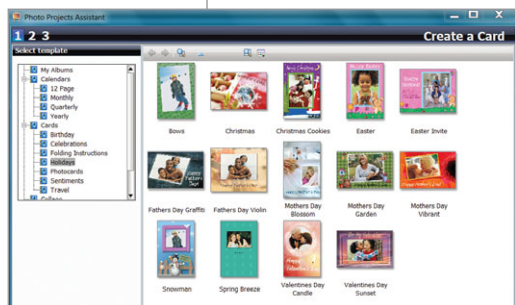
The process of creating a gift tag is similar to that of creating a greeting card. Because you have fewer items to customize, you can create a gift tag in minutes.

Return to the first page of the Photo Projects Assistant and click Gift Tags. In the workspace, click one of the six available templates. We'll stick with our theme by double-clicking the Snowman gift tag. This opens the assistant's second page.

In the workspace on the right, double-click the photo in the gift tag. This opens the Replace Placeholder dialog box. Browse the photos on your hard drive and select the one you'd like to place into the tag. Click Open.

The text is fairly generic and will likely work best with the default "To" and "From" designations, but you can change the text if you want. Click the text in the workspace, and in the software's left pane, customize the text. For example, you may want to have the "From" line include your name to save time writing it out by hand. As with cards, you can use tools at the top of the workspace to change the text. Click Next.

Save your project, print your tags, and you're ready to share your creativity with friends, family, and colleagues. ■



Roxio's Photo Projects Assistant lets you create personalized holiday cards in a range of styles.

BY HEIDI V. ANDERSON

# Microsoft PowerPoint 2007

## Customize Fonts With WordArt

Presentation

Beginner

WinXP/Vista/7

PowerPoint comes with dozens of great-looking built-in fonts. But even after you've explored the entire Fonts menu a couple of times, you may realize that your formatted words still don't look quite as compelling and customized as the text you see in places such as advertisements and movie titles. That's because many high-end marketing programs use custom fonts made specifically for that campaign by pro designers. Most PowerPoint presentations created by average office workers can't match that level of design, but you can get a more custom look with WordArt.

This standard PowerPoint feature (also found in the other Office programs) lets you add eye-catching, custom-looking style to your text just by selecting a look from a menu. In older PowerPoint versions, WordArt was of questionable use. Unless you were giving a presentation to a conference of circus promoters, the WordArt options were probably a little loud and garish for your purposes. But PowerPoint 2007's version of WordArt carries a more sophisticated look that you can frequently call on to make your slides more engaging while still keeping a professional feeling. But even with the new-and-improved WordArt, remember

that this tool is like cooking with spices. A little dash of it is probably all the flavor you need.

### Add WordArt

You can add WordArt in a couple of ways. The first is to insert a WordArt box and type in whatever text you'd like to add. The second is to convert existing, regular text into WordArt.

To start a brand-new WordArt block, go to the Insert tab and click the WordArt button. Browse the gallery of 30 WordArt looks for one you like (or that looks close to what you like; you can customize it later) and click an option. PowerPoint inserts a WordArt box onto your slide. Click inside it to type text.

If you'd like to make existing text into WordArt, you may get frustrated trying to copy the text and paste it into a WordArt box. Instead of copying and pasting the text into a new WordArt box, just highlight it where it currently exists, then look on the Format tab for the WordArt Styles section and click a style you like. Note that you can do this for parts of a text box, such as applying WordArt to just a single word in a slide title.

If you'd rather see your text appear in a new, separate WordArt box, highlight the text where it currently exists. Then click the Insert tab's WordArt button and pick a style. You'll see a new WordArt box appear on the slide, already filled with the text you highlighted. Click in the WordArt box to edit the text.

Let's say you decide to go the other direction, taking text styled with WordArt back to the realm of regular text. Select the text you want to convert, then click the WordArt Styles drop-down button (on the Format tab) and choose Clear WordArt.

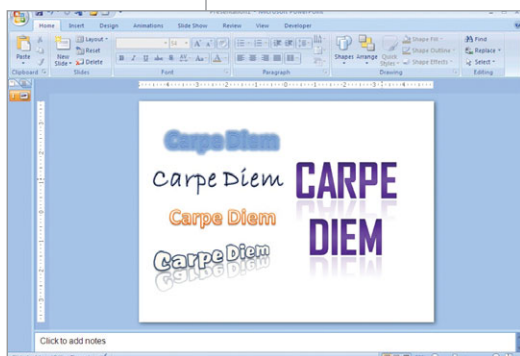
### Customize WordArt

With your WordArt in place, you can start customizing it. While a key strength of WordArt is its off-the-shelf formatting that saves you the trouble of design decisions, you can adjust just about every aspect of the existing design to make it completely your own. You can, for example, highlight the WordArt and choose a different font from the drop-down menu on the Home tab.

When you click a WordArt selection, the Format tab presents a variety of tools beside the WordArt Styles gallery for changing the look. The Text Fill button lets you change the color of the letters themselves. For really stylish colors, click the Text Fill button and hover over the Gradient selection. Here you can pick a variety of looks that make your fill color gradually fade in or out across your words. The Text Outline button lets you select the color of the line around the outside of each letter.

The Text Effects button lets WordArt really show its style with shadows, reflections, bevels, and more. Spend some time exploring the options here to see what WordArt can do in your slide designs. Just try to take it easy on the Transform effects, which squeeze, stretch, and twist text in circles. ■

BY TREVOR MEERS



Call in WordArt when you're looking for the distinctive feel of a custom font.

# Browsers

## Take Internet Explorer 9 For A Spin

Internet  
Explorer 9

Beginner

Once the undisputed king of the Web, Microsoft's Internet Explorer has been steadily losing market share to Mozilla's Firefox, Google's Chrome, and even Apple's Safari. Internet Explorer 9, now in beta, has a clean new look, speedier performance, and interesting new features. Load up your own copy of IE9 beta at [www.beautyoftheweb.com](http://www.beautyoftheweb.com). (NOTE: Before you install IE9, consider that it is in beta as we go to press, which means that it is a prerelease version. Thus, Microsoft offers limited support for it. If you encounter problems, you may find some answers at [tinyurl.com/3x2utpg](http://tinyurl.com/3x2utpg), but you are largely on your own. Don't install the software if you haven't backed up all critical data or you can't afford the downtime that a system crash would cause. Visit [tinyurl.com/327btlx](http://tinyurl.com/327btlx) for information that will help you determine whether to install IE9 beta.)

Once IE9 beta is installed, you'll soon find that the biggest changes over previous versions are obvious. If you've used Google Chrome, you'll quickly recognize the new spartan look that IE9 adopts. The frame around the browser is smaller, and all of the menus have been combined into just a couple of buttons on the right side of the browser. The Address bar and Search bar have been combined into one input field.

All of the main features are still there. A large Back button and smaller Forward button take up space on

the left side of the screen. On the right side of the new all-in-one bar are Reload and Stop buttons. Beyond that, you'll see the Favorites button, which looks like a star, and the Tools menu, which looks like a gear.

### Tabbed

IE9's new interface puts a lot of emphasis on tabs. As with previous versions, you can open multiple Web sites, each in its own tab. To start a new tab, just click the small blank tab on the right end of the tab lineup.

By default, the new tab page in IE9 displays links to your most recently visited sites. Rather than thumbnails of those pages, as in Google Chrome or Apple Safari, IE9 shows only icons for each site. Perhaps this is one feature of IE9 that will mature a bit between the beta version and the final copy.

You can move tabs around if you'd like them in a different order. Even better is tab "tearing." If you decide you want a particular Web site in its own window rather than hiding out in one tab among many, you can simply grab the top of the tab and drag it away from the tab bar. That tab becomes a new IE9 window. The page within stays just as you had it, without reloading.

### Pinned

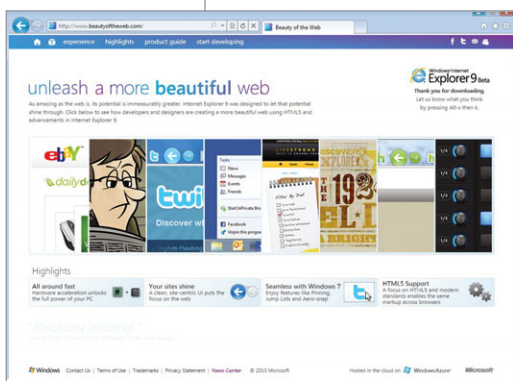
IE9 works with Windows 7 to offer a useful new tool available to site developers. First, users can pin any site to the Win7 Taskbar by dragging a tab with the site to the Taskbar. Next, clicking a pinned site's icon can open a Jump List, which contains links to various pages within the site. For instance, you might pin your favorite retail site to the Taskbar, with a Jump List that includes a link right to your saved shopping cart.

IE9 also includes a revamped Download Manager. When you download a file, a notification appears at the bottom of the screen in IE9's new, all-purpose notifications area. Choose whether you want to save or run the file, and the View Downloads window appears. You can return to the View Downloads window at any time through the Tools menu to see where your downloads were saved.

### Old Habits

If you like the busier look of Internet Explorers past, you can bring back the old menus. Right-click the Back/Forward button area and select Favorites Bar, Command Bar, or Status Bar to see the toolbars the way they used to be. The Favorites Bar was always one of our, well, favorites, so it's nice to have the option of turning it on. It does look a little clunky, though, plopped into the middle of an otherwise streamlined presentation. Those who would like to get back to the basics should enjoy the slimmer, faster IE9. ■

BY ALAN PHELPS



Microsoft's latest version of Internet Explorer, IE9, has a slick interface and a few innovative features.

### URL Shorteners

#### Beginner

Some Web addresses are easy to remember and don't take up a lot of space when you need to type them out. But if you want to link to a page deep within a site, the lengthy URL you may face can take up space in Twitter posts, text messages, emails, and other mediums where space is at a premium.

For example, say you'd like to send a friend a link to a *New York Times* article you just read. Typically, you'll end up with something unwieldy, such as [www.nytimes.com/2010/10/12/technology/12soft.html?\\_r=1&hpw](http://www.nytimes.com/2010/10/12/technology/12soft.html?_r=1&hpw).

A variety of competing services will chop this sort of long, unmanageable URL down to size. Instead of a dispiriting gush of letters and numbers, you'll wind up with a new URL only a handful of characters long. All you have to do is visit one of these sites and paste the long-form version of the address, and you'll get a short URL anyone can click to visit the original page.

### Bit.ly

One of the most popular URL shortening services is Bit.ly (<http://bit.ly>). Head to the Bit.ly site and you'll see an input field near the top of the page where you can paste the standard URL of your choice. Click the Shorten button and a new URL beginning with <http://bit.ly> appears in the box below. In some cases, Bit.ly will return a more customized

version of its short link. The site shrunk our example URL to [nyti.ms/bDACpq](http://nyti.ms/bDACpq). It's much smaller, yet the "nyti.ms" portion still indicates that the link will head to the *New York Times* site.

When you paste or otherwise use that new link elsewhere on the Internet, folks who click it will be redirected by Bit.ly's servers to the original URL. The process is seamless to end users, who don't have to do anything but click as usual.

Click around the Bit.ly site and you'll find you can keep track of the shortened URLs you've used, as well as see statistics about who is clicking

them. That's not super useful for the average Joe, but it's handy for content providers who want to track traffic and where it's coming from.

### Goo.gl

Another simple and ultra-reliable URL shortening service comes from Google. Visit Goo.gl (<http://goo.gl>) to make diminutive URLs using much the same process as at Bit.ly. Paste the long version of the address into the input field, click the Shorten button, and the site delivers a new, abbreviated address that you can copy and paste.

As with Bit.ly, Goo.gl lets you track a shortened URL you've created to see if anyone is clicking the link. Below the main input box, you'll find a list of your URLs, along with click data and a link for further details. Click to see information on referers, the countries where users are located, the browsers they use, and other stats.

One Goo.gl bonus is the automatic generation of a QR code with each link. QR codes are similar to the bar codes you see on products at grocery stores, but in a square shape with blocks and dots rather than lines. Software available for camera-equipped smartphones lets mobile users focus their lenses on QR codes to load up URLs automatically rather than typing them in by hand. It's great for fast, on-the-go browsing.

Although QR code readers aren't all that common yet, they provide an interesting option. You don't even have to visit the Goo.gl site to set up a QR code for an existing Goo.gl URL. Just add ".qr" to the end of any Google-shortened address to generate a page with nothing but the graphical code.

### Look Ahead

Some users complain about shortened URLs because there's generally no way to know ahead of time where it will take you. Theoretically, one of these addresses could lead to a malware site, and it's probably best to avoid shortened addresses if you don't know who created them. Typically, though, the tiny URLs you see will be pasted to Twitter posts, blog articles, or emails from people you know. Treated with a little caution, downsized URLs provide some handy shortcuts around the Web. ■

BY ALAN PHELPS



Google's URL shortening service, Goo.gl, lets you shrink Web addresses, track their use, and use optical QR codes for mobile browsing.

# Email

## Explore The New Windows Live Mail

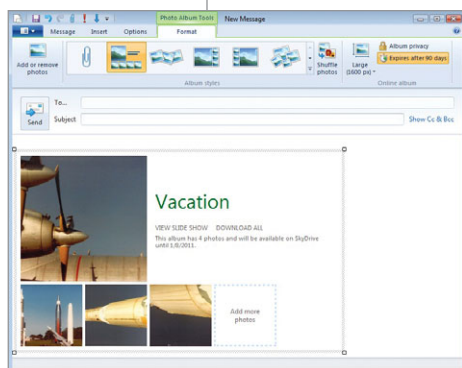
Windows Live  
Mail

Beginner

For a long time, Microsoft's Outlook Express was the email client of choice among home and many small-business users. Although the email world has been largely heading off in the direction of Web-based clients, such as Gmail and revamped versions of Hotmail and Yahoo! Mail, there has always been a place for standalone email programs. If you like the idea of your email stored on your own computer, Microsoft's Windows Live Mail 2011 is the modern-day successor to Outlook Express.

Windows Live Mail is part of Microsoft's Windows Live Essentials, a handful of Internet-centric applications aimed to compete with similar offerings from Google and elsewhere. Along with Mail, the package includes the Messenger IM (instant messaging) client, Photo Gallery application, video-editing program Movie Maker, and other programs. You don't have to download everything if you only want to use one or two of the programs. Just head to [explore.live.com](http://explore.live.com) and look for the link to Essentials.

If you're running Windows Vista, you'll need to make sure you have Service Pack 2 installed, as well as the Windows Platform Update before Windows Live Mail will work; Windows 7 users are good to go.



Windows Live Mail 2011 is Microsoft's new standalone email client, nicely designed for home and small-business users.

### First Look

Those who have some experience with the latest version of Microsoft Office will recognize the basic layout of the new Mail screen. Across the top of the window, you'll find the

same Ribbon-style toolbars with different menus that call up sets of buttons.

If you're comfortable with the interface, you'll be even more comfortable with getting Live Mail to function with any other email accounts you may have. Live Mail doesn't ask a lot from users trying to tie into their existing inboxes. During setup, simply type in your email address and password, and for most email services, Live Mail does the rest. The messages will start flowing into your inbox.

Next, it's time to manage the deluge. Chief among Live Mail's new tricks is the Conversations

view, which organizes messages by thread. Click the View menu, select the Conversations button, and choose On. Messages relating to the same subject (that is, with the same Subject line) will flock together and collapse into groups. To see all of the messages in a thread, click the arrow next to the first email in the conversation and the rest of the messages will tumble out underneath. You can also click the message itself and then click the Expand/Collapse button in the toolbar to roll up or unpack the conversation.

### Picture This

Do you like to share pictures using email? Live Mail works with another Live Essentials component, SkyDrive, to help you share pics. SkyDrive is a free online storage service that gives you a fast and easy way to share pictures without burning through anyone's inbox size limits.

To share photos with Live Mail and SkyDrive, click Photo Email in the New section of the Home menu. Follow the on-screen prompts to browse your hard drive for the photos you want to share. You can select additional photos, arrange them in different layouts, and click the Album Privacy button to restrict who views your pictures. When you're finished, click Send and Live Mail saves the pictures on SkyDrive automatically so that all of your recipients can see them.

Live Mail also integrates with Windows Live Calendar so that you can quickly add appointments you are informed about through email. By default, you'll see a calendar along the right side of the Live Mail screen, with a text box at the bottom for adding appointments. You can switch the Calendar off from the View menu if you'd like, but it provides a handy place to keep track of your schedule.

From within the email message reading window or on the main Home menu, you can click the Add To Calendar button to open a New Event item with the email text. Set a date and time, select a few other options if necessary, and the message becomes an appointment.

Take a walk through Live Mail 2011's other menu items and options, and you might see another reason or two to give Microsoft's new email client a try. ■

BY ALAN PHELPS

# Personal Finance

## Intuit Quicken Premier 2011

Intuit Quicken  
Premier 2011

Beginner

It's been almost a year since Intuit acquired Mint.com, and the union has manifested itself through changes to both Quicken and Mint.com. With the release of Quicken 2011, Intuit introduces the first product to really reflect the blending of Mint.com's Web-based financial approach and Quicken's desktop software. We took a look at the new product, which was officially released on Oct. 14, 2010. Here's a bit of what you can expect.

### Interface Insight

One of the first things you'll notice when you open Quicken 2011 is its clean interface. Although it doesn't look drastically different from previous versions, the overall appearance exudes order and purpose. Large, simplified buttons and tab menus inspire order.

But this new upgrade is about more than just the feng shui. The Home tab is cleanly divided into three sections: a pie chart to show where your money goes, monthly bills, and a chart tracking your spending goals. If you haven't completed the steps to set up one of these sections, the program labels how many minutes it takes to complete that process.

If you've spent any time on Mint.com's site, you can see the connection between the two products at a glance. The Quicken 2011 interface feels much more like a Web-based program than any previous version. The tabs and buttons have a look and feel that is very similar to those on Mint.com.

### New Tricks

Quicken 2011 also has new features. Most of the improvements are aimed at cutting to the chase to speed tasks. For example, the process for adding new bank, credit card, and investment accounts is streamlined so users will be done in just three steps.

Some updates have improved the software's accuracy. Quicken 2011's new automated categorization algorithms mean transactions are categorized correctly over 90% of the time, according to Intuit. You'll avoid double-counting credit card payments because they are automatically matched to transfers

from your checking or savings accounts. And the budget planning tools take into consideration your historical spending habits, so you have a better chance of actually sticking to budgets you create.

Investors who like to keep a careful eye on things at all times will be pleased to know that stock quotes are automatically refreshed every 15 minutes in Quicken 2011. And because there seems to be a new bank around the corner every day, there are now more financial institutions to choose from when setting up automatic downloads for transactions and account balances. Quicken 2011 offers a list of 12,000 banks and credit unions in the United States, up from 5,000 in the previous version.

### Edition Pricing

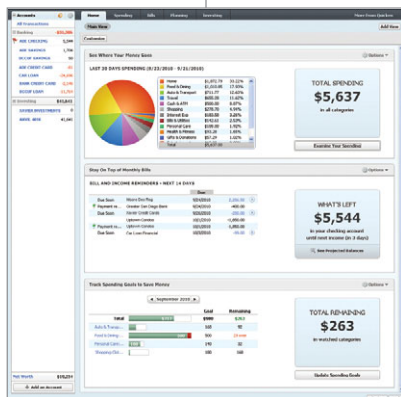
As in past versions of Quicken, the software is available in different editions at different prices. The Quicken Starter Edition (\$29.99) is designed for users with a fairly basic wish list: get a handle on the checkbook, pay bills on time, and avoid overdraft fees. For those users who are really looking for some concrete help in saving money, Quicken Deluxe (\$59.99) is a good option. It offers features that help create customized savings plans. Quicken Premier (\$89.99) is a more robust offering. It has the tools investors need to track and manage their money and plan ahead for tax time.

### The Road Ahead

With the release of Quicken 2011, Intuit is making a statement about its intent for future products. The company is clearly pursuing a path that combines the capabilities built into the Quicken software and the ease of use people have come to love with Mint.com. So what does this mean for subsequent product releases? Is it possible that the two products will one day merge completely?

Our source at Intuit says that the company envisions a loose integration of the two products so that Mint.com and Quicken could be synced if a user wanted to. This integration could be further extended to synchronization with the iPhone application. This would make it possible to do such things as categorizing your transactions on the go while updating your Quicken desktop software, as well. ■

BY JENNIE SCHLUETER

Intuit Quicken  
2011's new  
interface is clean  
and simplified.

# Microsoft Excel 2007

Quick Studies  
How-To

## Text Alignment Tricks

Spreadsheet

Intermediate

WinXP/Vista/7

**B**ecause Excel is built to handle numbers rather than words, formatting text in your worksheets can get a little frustrating. When your text is wider than the column it's in, you run into strange truncations of the words. When your text sits on the left side of columns while numbers sit on the right, it just doesn't look right. If you're running into these and other text problems, use this month's tricks to get the look you need.

### Wrap Text

The text issue that probably gives Excel users the most headaches arises when you try to fit a lengthy piece of text into a cell. One solution is simply going to the top of the window and dragging the right column border to make it wider. That can lead to its own untidy look, though. What if some of the labels in a column listing corporate divisions are as short as "Tax" and others have names such as "Regional Sales-Pacific Rim/China Division"? If you drag the column wide enough to handle the longest labels, you

get lots of empty real estate on the shorter labels. A better solution is leaving the column width at a more average size and setting text to wrap into multiple lines. Click the column title at the top of the window (such as "C") and click the

Wrap Text button

on the Ribbon's Home tab. Now every cell in the column will automatically wrap the text to a new line if one line of text exceeds the column width.

Sometimes this still doesn't make all your text visible. That means you probably have a row-height issue. Excel may be preventing the cell from growing taller to handle wrapped text. To ensure you don't run into this, click the cell (or column of cells) you want to adjust, click the Ribbon's Home tab, and click the Format button in the Cells section. Select AutoFit Row Height to make Excel expand the cell to handle however many rows of text are necessary.

### Align Text

Excel automatically places numbers on the right side of cells and text on the left. Sometimes that's a handy setup, making it easy to scan a list and spot different kinds of information. But when you'd rather see everything neatly lined up, use the Home tab's alignment buttons. You can align text to the right, left, or center. (The latter being especially useful for making column headings more attractive.) And, of course, remember that you can use the alignment tools on numbers, too.

If you've adjusted cells' heights, you may want to adjust the text's vertical alignment for a better look, too. You'll find those options on the Home tab right above the horizontal alignment buttons.

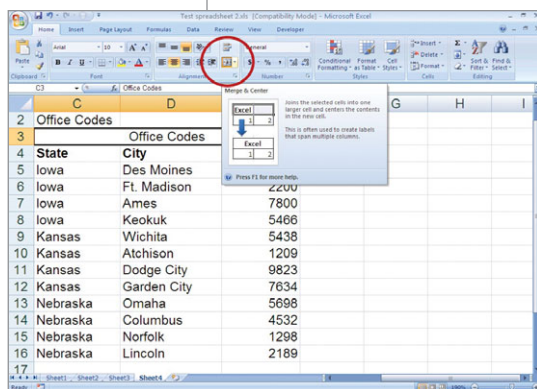
In rare cases, you actually may want text to run at an angle. Short column labels, for example, sometimes work well at a 45-degree angle. To add an angle to a cell's text, including setting it to read vertically, use the Orientation button on the Home tab in the Alignment section.

### Merge Cells

Here's a common dilemma: At the top of the worksheet, you create a label that applies to several columns. How do you make this clear by stretching the label across all the columns? Dragging the label's cell any wider won't help, because you'll widen all the cells below the label, too. The secret is to merge the label cell with those adjacent to it. Use the Merge & Center button in the Home tab's Alignment section.

Highlight the cells you want to merge (they can be adjacent either horizontally, as in our example described above, or vertically) and click the Merge & Center button. Now you'll have one large cell with the text located in its center. If you'd rather place the text on a side of the cell, click the cell and use the Alignment buttons as described previously.

Even though this large cell now straddles, say, three other columns, you can still adjust the widths of those columns individually. Your merged cell will grow and shrink so that it always fills the same space as the columns it covers. ■



Turn an awkward label into a single cell that spans several columns of data using the Merge & Center tool.

# Security

## Accelerate Malware Scanning

Security

Intermediate

It's important to scan your computer for viruses and other malware on a regular basis, but full scans of the entire system may take a painfully long time, especially on a mature system with multiple hard drives or a huge number of files. There are some ways to shave valuable time from each scan cycle without significantly compromising the security of your computer.

### Remove Unnecessary Content

Eliminating unnecessary content from the computer results in fewer files to scan, and scan time is therefore reduced. You can remove unnecessary applications by running the Add Or Remove Programs tool through the Control Panel.

Review the list of applications and uninstall programs that aren't used anymore. Considering that some large applications install thousands of files and are several gigabytes in size, removing old or unwanted applications can clear significant space on the system.

There are other tricks that can reduce the file burden on your malware scanner. For example, relocate your large photo collection, document library, or other space-hogging folders to a second hard drive (that you are not including in the scan) or an external drive. Also delete the cache and temporary files from your Web browser.

### Reduce Hard Drives & Folders

A full-system malware scan will normally inspect every storage device on the computer, including every hard drive, CD or DVD drive, USB thumb drive, or external hard drive. When initiating a scan, you can speed up the scanning process by selecting only the system's main hard drive (usually the C: drive) where most applications are installed and files are downloaded.

Some malware scanners get even more specific, letting you select folders and subfolders for scanning. Keep in mind that this is not a full-system scan, and infected files lurking beyond the drives and folders that you select will not be inspected.

### Skip Harmless File Types

Malware is only dangerous when it is actually executed on your computer. Malicious Web sites, executable applications (such as file downloads or email attachments), and even some types of image files can potentially carry malware into your computer. But many other file types, such as plain text files, are no immediate threat. If your malware scanner lets you skip harmless file types, it's possible to speed up scanning dramatically.

For example, some scanners provide a scanning option to Scan Only Known File Types. This causes the scanner to ignore file types other than those known to potentially harbor malware. Once again, fewer files to scan means faster scanning cycles. Compressed files are not dangerous themselves, but they can contain infected files. Instruct the scanner to scan inside compressed files to locate malware hidden inside compressed files.

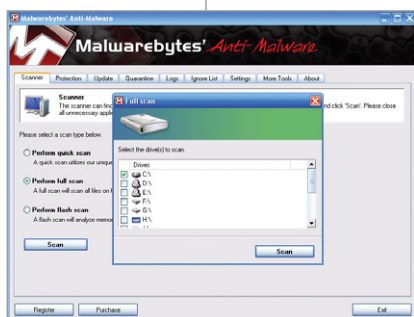
You can also sometimes opt to exclude specific file types (files with specific extensions such as .TXT or .JPG) that you know are harmless. Remember that every malware scanner provides a different suite of features, so review the documentation for your own scanner to determine how (or if) file exclusions are allowed.

### Don't Ignore Memory & Full Scans

These are a few simple tricks to help speed up malware scanning on a typical computer, but there are also some things to avoid. First, never turn off memory scanning. If a virus does manage to infiltrate the system, it will usually reside in memory where it can infect other files and initiate other damage, so the malware scanner should always have an eye on memory (sometimes termed "memory objects").

It's also important to understand that these tactics are never meant to prevent or avoid full-system scans. Conduct full scans of every hard drive and file periodically. If you do a lot of downloading of new files and attachments, run a full scan at least once a week. Otherwise, you can probably make due with a full scan perhaps once every two to four weeks. ■

BY STEPHEN J. BIGELOW



You can speed up malware scanning by omitting thumb, external, or other nonessential drives from the scan.

# Microsoft Word 2007

## Link To Other Applications With Smart Tags

Word Processor

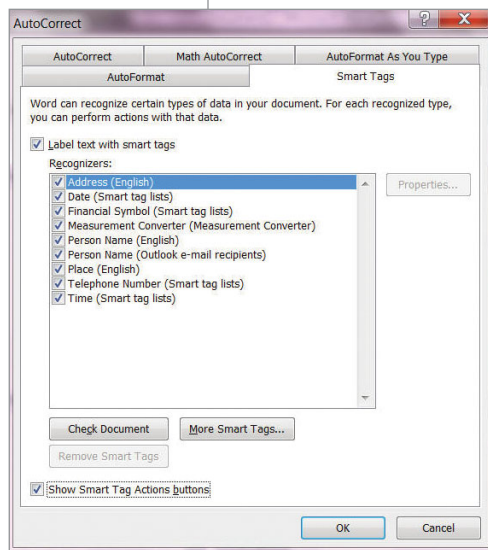
Advanced

WinXP/Vista/7

**S**mart Tags can be a valuable resource if you work repeatedly with certain kinds of information in your documents. With a Smart Tag, you can quickly link to other sources of information and other applications without needing to start them individually. For example, when you type a person's name into a document, a Smart Tag lets you directly add that person to your Outlook Contacts.

The Smart Tags that come with Microsoft Word 2007 appear for the following types of information that you type into a document: people's names, dates, times, addresses, places, telephone numbers, recent Microsoft Outlook email recipients, and stock ticker symbols. Text that is available for a Smart Tag operation will have a dotted purple line under it.

First make sure that Smart Tags are turned on in Word. Click the Office button and Word Options. Choose Proofing from the list on the left and then click AutoCorrect Options. Click the Smart Tags tab and make sure the Label Text With Smart Tags box is checked, as well as all of the Recognizers in the list below it. A Recognizer identifies text in your document that can be used with a Smart Tag



The Smart Tags tab in the AutoCorrect dialog box lets you control whether to use Smart Tags and how to use them.

document in any standard format, for example 10/10/2011, October 10, 2011, or Oct. 10, 2011. Hover the cursor over one of the dates you just typed to make the Smart Tag symbol appear. (It looks like a lowercase "i" in a circle.) Move the cursor on top of the symbol and click. In this case, you will get options that are relevant to dates: Schedule A Meeting and Show My Calendar. Clicking one of these will open Microsoft Outlook to its section for meetings or the calendar.

You will also see options that are common to all of the Smart Tags, regardless of the information type. Clicking Remove This Smart Tag causes the underlined text no longer to be recognized by the Smart Tagging process. The line underneath it disappears, and the Smart Tag symbol is not available. If you change your mind, you can recover the Smart Tagging for any removed items. Click the Office button and Word Options and choose Proofing. Click the AutoCorrect Options button and the Smart Tags tab. At the bottom, click the Recheck Document button. Click Yes and then OK. Click OK again to return to the document. Smart Tags will reappear where you had removed them.

The other common selection in the Smart Tag drop-down list is Stop Recognizing "X" As Date or Stop Recognizing "X" As Smart Tag, where "X" is the text being designated for the Smart Tag. For example, if the text is the date October 10, 2011, choosing not to recognize it as a date will remove the Smart Tag for the affected date and all future instances of that specific date. Choosing not to recognize it as a smart tag leaves the date as a date for other purposes, but removes the Smart Tag for the affected date and all future instances of that date. Deletions performed with this method are permanent.

### Smart Tag Options

The final common selection in the Smart Tag drop-down list is Smart Tag Options. This takes you to a dialog box that contains the same options as those reached through the Office button, as described previously. Here you can make changes to Smart Tag behavior across the document.

Sometimes Smart Tags can be a distraction in a document if you aren't going to use them. In that case, click the Remove Smart Tags button at the bottom. You also have the option of having Word indicate which text has a Smart Tag capability without having the Smart Tag button pop up. Uncheck the Show Smart Tag Actions Buttons at the bottom of the pane to do this. ■

BY TOM HANCOCK

# Quick Tips

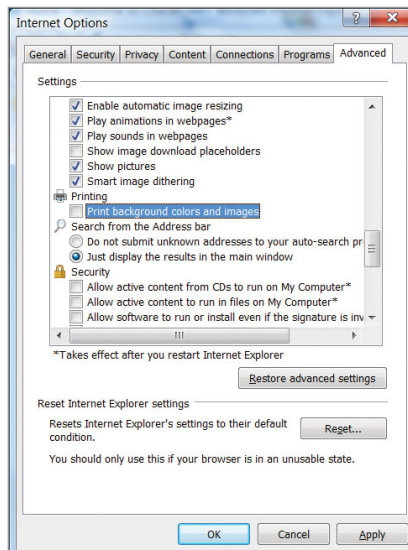
## Secrets For Succeeding In Common Tasks

BY STEPHEN J. BIGELOW

### Internet Explorer 8

**Question:** How can I stop background colors and images from printing in Internet Explorer 8?

**Answer:** It's common for Internet enthusiasts to print out interesting Web pages for future or offline reference, but many Web sites are not printer-friendly, and the color combinations and graphic that might look great on a display may look awful when printed (not to mention the unnecessary use of expensive ink).



It's easy to turn off background colors and images so they won't be printed. With IE8 running, click Tools, select Internet Options, click the Advanced tab, scroll down the list of settings, and then uncheck the Print Background Colors And Images option. Click Apply and OK to save your changes.

Disable colors and background images when printing Web pages from Internet Explorer 8.

### Microsoft Word 2007

**Question:** Is it normal for my Word 2007 documents to scroll so slowly when there are a lot of images in them? How can I speed things up?

**Answer:** Documents with a lot of graphics (such as embedded photos) can really bog down scrolling performance. Word 2007 provides an option that lets you replace images with simple placeholders that can dramatically improve

scrolling performance when you're in the thick of document editing. With your document loaded in Word 2007, click the Office button and select Word Options. Select the Advanced option in the left menu, scroll down to the Show Document Content area, and then check the Show Picture Placeholders option. Click OK to save your changes. You can uncheck this box when your editing is finished.

### Scanning Images

**Question:** I scan a lot of family photos, and they take up a considerable amount of hard drive space. How can I save space without compromising photo quality?

**Answer:** Scanning and saving image data is always a compromise, so the issue is not whether to compromise image quality for space, but how much compromise are you willing to make? Saving space is easy. You can opt to scan photos in a lower resolution (for example, 600 dpi [dots per inch] instead of 1,200 dpi) and save the scanned images in a lossy file format, such as JPEG (Joint Photographic Experts Group), rather than a lossless format. Often, some combination of those two tactics will yield good-looking photo scans that take up a reasonable amount of hard drive space.

However, one size does not fit all. You can always vary the scan resolution and image file quality depending on each picture and its importance to you and your family. For example, you can probably scan most everyday photos at lower resolutions and save them in lossy formats without noticing the difference when viewing them on a laptop or desktop display. But for those few special moments such as wedding photos or family group shots, you can always increase the scan resolution and choose a better-quality file format.

Also, keep in mind that storage is cheaper today than ever before. You can purchase a 1TB (terabyte) external hard drive for less than \$100, so it's possible to offload large numbers of image files from your PC for an extremely reasonable price.

## Quick Tips

### Laptops vs. Desktops

**Question:** Is it better to buy my child a laptop or a desktop computer for college? Are there any ways to prevent theft of the system?

**Answer:** Most modern college classes require mobility among buildings, labs, libraries, and other campus locations. While a desktop system is somewhat harder to steal, a laptop is unquestionably the better choice due to its portability. Protecting that laptop against theft, however, is another matter entirely.

The first line of defense is always user awareness, so your child has to understand his environment. Your child should not leave the laptop unattended

under any circumstances and should always lock the laptop in a drawer, cabinet, or locker when he will be away. Second, it's a good idea to buy a thumb drive along with the laptop so that your child can back up his work regularly. It's important that he keeps the thumb drive in a separate secure place—that way, even if the laptop fails or is stolen, your child would be able to complete his work on another PC. Third, mitigate your investment and buy an inexpensive laptop that won't break the bank if it needs to be replaced. Finally, consider a tracking/recovery tool, such as Absolute Software's LoJack for Laptops (\$39.99 for one year; [www.absolute.com](http://www.absolute.com)), which may result in the eventual recovery of the unit in the event that it is stolen.

### Graphics Cards

**Question:** I want to upgrade the graphics card in my desktop PC, but the card I want recommends a 450-watt power supply. Is it really important to follow the recommendation?

**Answer:** The latest and greatest graphics cards can draw a tremendous amount of energy, so it's important that the system's power supply can provide enough power to do the job. If not, the system may become unstable, fail to boot, or even trip the power supply's internal circuit breaker.

The easiest place to locate the power supply capacity is on the back of the desktop chassis. The

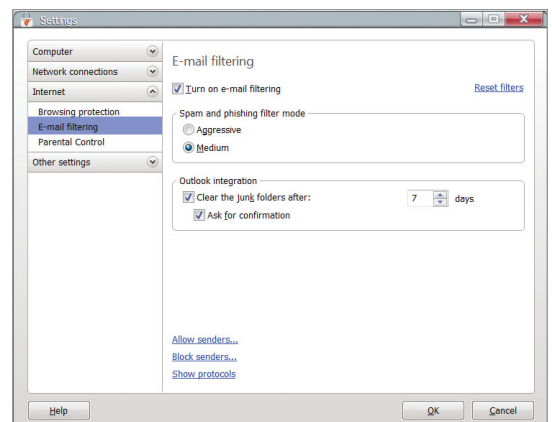
wattage rating is normally listed on a label or stamped somewhere near the AC cord connector. If not, you should be able to locate the wattage rating in the specification sheet for your system.

If the power supply is too small (or, if it's borderline and you have other upgrades planned for the system), we recommend spending the extra money for a quality power supply upgrade. All modern PC power supplies are high-efficiency switching-type devices that only provide the power that's required (up to their limits), so very little power is wasted if you opt to buy a larger power supply than you need.

### Junk Mail

**Question:** Can I configure my malware checker to delete junk mail automatically?

**Answer:** It's usually possible. Many malware suites integrate with email clients, such as Outlook, and allow some type of junk mail filtering. For example, F-Secure software includes Outlook integration under the Internet and Email Filtering menus. In this particular example, make sure that the Turn On E-mail Filtering box is checked, set the spam and phishing filter mode, and then select the Clear The Junk Folders After box and set it to clear after a few days. As a rule, it's a good idea to select Ask For Confirmation so that you have the opportunity to take a quick peek at the junk entries to make sure there's no legitimate emails accidentally caught by the filter.



Enable the junk mail filtering option in your malware software and configure other options as appropriate.

## What To Do When

# Spammers Hijack Your Email

Email is surely one of the great conveniences of this modern age, but it can also be annoying. As if junk mail from your friends and relatives wasn't bad enough, legitimate businesses have also gotten better at sending a fairly steady stream of emailed offers. Imagine how surprised you'd be, then, if instead of commiserating *with* you about spam, people in your address book started complaining *to* you about spam—spam coming from your email address.

If you're certain you didn't deliberately send any spam to the people in your contacts list, you need to consider the likelihood that your account has been hijacked or that a spammer is spoofing your address. Either way, you'll want to find a resolution fast, before your contacts begin asking for opt-out options.

### Spoofing vs. Hijacking

When someone says his email account has been spoofed, he means that someone or something (usually bulk email software or an individual spammer) has changed the sender address and other parts of the email header to make it look like the message originated from somewhere other than its true source. This is an attempt on the part of a spammer to make it hard to trace his or her illegal bulk mailing or virus-spreading activities. A spammer does not need to actually get into your account to send forged emails.

The hijacking of an email account is a bit more straightforward. As its name implies, the account is literally taken over by someone who is not supposed to have access and intends to wreak havoc, either by unleashing spam or viruses or by gaining access to

additional personal information. A hijacked account is one in which the spammer actually broke into the account. The result is that the contacts in your email address book could receive spam that appears to have come from you but actually came from another source. Worse yet, this usually triggers a chain reaction whereby the spammed message contains a virus that searches recipients' address books and continues sending to those users, listing their addresses in the From field.

### Getting In

A common method for hijacking a user's system is called phishing, whereby a hacker will try to get information, such as passwords and usernames, by posing as a legitimate business. "[At that point,] spammers can obtain various user credentials on the black market and use them as their own," says Tim Armstrong, malware researcher at Kaspersky Lab ([usa.kaspersky.com](http://usa.kaspersky.com)). Hackers may also sometimes use a phishing attack followed by malware infections that steal passwords and user accounts.

"In the past, improperly implemented Web-based email services allowed attackers to run brute-force attacks against their mail servers, where spammers just kept guessing at usernames and passwords until they got them right," says Armstrong. Though most of these holes have been closed, users still need to employ good security software and a healthy measure of wariness when online.

Malicious programs on the Internet can also pose a risk. For instance, you could be surfing a malicious Web site with outdated and unpatched software or maybe just opening and running an



emailed attachment from an unknown source or clicking a link in an infected email. "Once the computer is infected, it can be added to a spam botnet and then used to infect other computers by sending malicious emails on to their contacts," Armstrong says.

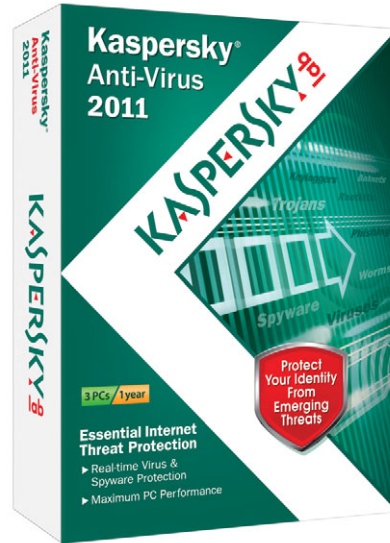
### Protection Provisions

Although even security experts warn that there is no ironclad way to protect yourself from these attacks, the best place to start is by ensuring your security software and operating system are up-to-date. You'll also want to avoid less-than-scrupulous Web sites that allow lots of potentially harmful pop-up ads and don't stay current with software patches. And as a general rule, you shouldn't log in to a Web site by following a link in your email, just in case that email was sent from someone other than the sender you think.

Password protection may seem like a hard thing to mess up, but according to Armstrong, the "Forgot Your Password?" password recovery features that are built into many Web sites are commonly abused, making them a point of vulnerability. "When Sarah Palin's Yahoo! account was hacked, it was because the security questions for password reset on her Yahoo! account were easily Googled: her birth date, ZIP code, and information about where she met her spouse," says Armstrong.

So choose passwords that won't be easy for others to guess based on things such as birthdays, anniversaries, and where you live. Make sure that the passwords are complex, with a combination of letters (both uppercase and lowercase) and numbers. And although it's easier for you to remember, don't use the same password for different accounts and services.

Of course, it's essential to arm your computer with current security and antivirus software. Many programs, including Internet Security 2011 (\$79.95) from Kaspersky Lab, are comprehensive and user-friendly. The Security Gadget feature that is part of



Though not as full-featured as Internet Security 2011, Kaspersky Lab's Anti-virus 2011 offers anti-phishing defenses and protection against spyware, Trojans, and more.

Internet Security 2011 and the slightly scaled-down version, Anti-Virus 2011 (\$59.95), sits on a user's Desktop in much the same way as other Windows gadgets. It gives users comfort at a glance by appearing all green when things are secure. When the gadget appears yellow or red, you know a security concern needs to be addressed.

Further, checking whether a file is safe to open is as simple as dragging it and dropping it onto the Security Gadget. The file will be automatically



The Security Gadget, which is part of both Internet Security 2011 and Anti-virus 2011, sits on a user's Desktop and allows at-a-glance security information for added peace of mind.

scanned, assessing any potential danger using the latest security data. And buttons on the gadget let users delve a bit deeper into some of the program's tools and menus for quick and easy access to even more information about your computer's security.

### Recognize A Breach

Unfortunately, some attacks are inevitable in this connected world. But how do you know if it's happened to you? One of the reasons email security breaches are so nefarious is that typically, most of the damage has been done before you even realize you have a problem.

Although you can check your Sent folder to see if there has been any strange activity you don't recognize, you likely wouldn't know to look for anything strange unless you already had reason to be suspicious. And that suspicion is usually triggered by comments made to you by the people whose addresses you store in your contacts list. If they begin receiving strange emails that appear to be from you, they'll likely contact you to find out what's going on, especially if the emails are launching infections on their computers.

Google's Gmail provides a feature called Last Account Activity that lets you look up the IP (Internet Protocol) address used the last 10 times you logged in. To see how this works, go to Gmail ([www.gmail.com](http://www.gmail.com)), log in to your account, and scroll to the bottom of the Inbox Web page. Here you'll see a fine-print line that says Last Account Activity followed by information about how recently you accessed the account and from which IP address. The Details link lets you learn more about these sessions, sign out suspicious activity, and set up alerts for anything you don't recognize.

### Cleanup

Once it's clear that your security has been compromised, it's time for

damage control. One of the first things you need to do is change your passwords. This won't be enough to deter a determined hacker, though. For example, in a Gmail account, an intruder could take advantage of his illicit access to set up email forwarding rules that would send him or her a copy of every message you receive, including password reset messages. To close this loophole, click the Settings link in the top-right corner of Gmail and then click Forwarding And POP/IMAP. Ensure that you have disabled forwarding and that your filters list hasn't allowed any rules to forward messages to the attacker.

You'll also want to make sure that the hacker didn't add a recovery email address to your account. To check, click Settings, Accounts And Import, Google Account Settings, and Change Password Recovery Options and then enter your password. In the Email section, make sure only the email addresses you approve are listed as able to receive password reset messages. While you're here, it's also a good idea to change your security question and answer in the Security Question section.

Keep in mind that sometimes, you are your own worst enemy when it comes to security. Facebook and Twitter users frequently allow third-party applications to run on their computers. You'll want to make sure that a hacker hasn't added a malicious program to one of these third-party apps on your account. Pay special attention to what permissions you are giving when allowing these programs to run.

Because Web-based email applications have become a portal for so many online capabilities and applications, in the event of a breach, it's important to think outside of the email box. You'll want to check the settings on things such as your calendar, voice applications, and chat applications to make sure the attacker hasn't

changed settings that would allow him or her to continue snooping on your activities.

### Damage Control

After you've done what you can to secure your email account, it's important to own up to any problems you may have inadvertently caused by contacting everyone in your address

book. Inform them of the breach and warn them that they have likely received a message or messages that are—best-case scenario—annoying, and—worst-case scenario—infected with a harmful virus. Urge your contacts to immediately delete anything from you before opening it until you give the all clear. ■

BY JENNIE SCHLUETER

## Small-Business Spam: Your First Response

**H**aving a stranger hack into your email account is annoying enough for a home user. But if you're a small-business owner, this kind of breach can sink your company for good. You don't want to get caught in anyone's spam filter—or be slapped with the justice of anti-spam laws.

If, despite your best efforts to keep company servers secure, you suffer a breach, begin by sending an email to customers and clients explaining that there has been a breach but that the problem is being or has been resolved. You should also clearly state how to recognize and avoid any bogus emails that may appear to come from your company and remind your customers not to send any personally identifiable information as a response to these emails.

Then, follow up immediately by sending out a letter through the postal mail detailing exactly what happened, how you fixed it, and what you're doing to ensure it doesn't happen again. A postal letter will reassure customers of the validity of your claim and your ability to fix the problem.

It might also be a good idea to check in with a lawyer regarding your state's laws dealing with hackers and spammers. It's best to be prepared on all sides, both with your responsibilities to the client/customer and your rights as a victim of a spammer.

The screenshot shows the Bureau of Consumer Protection Business Center website. The header includes the FTC logo, 'BUREAU OF CONSUMER PROTECTION BUSINESS CENTER', and navigation links for ABOUT, FEDERAL TRADE COMMISSION, FILE A COMPLAINT, ORDER PUBLICATIONS, and PRIVACY POLICY. A search bar is present. The left sidebar contains links for ADVERTISING & MARKETING, CREDIT & FINANCE, PRIVACY & SECURITY, SELECTED INDUSTRIES, LEGAL RESOURCES, BUSINESS CENTER BLOG, and TOPICS. The main content area is titled 'The CAN-SPAM Act: A Compliance Guide for Business (PDF)' and contains text explaining the act and a list of five key requirements for businesses.

**The CAN-SPAM Act: A Compliance Guide for Business (PDF)**

Do you use email in your business? The CAN-SPAM Act, a law that sets the rules for commercial email, establishes requirements for commercial messages, gives recipients the right to have you stop emailing them, and spells out tough penalties for violations.

Despite its name, the CAN-SPAM Act doesn't apply just to bulk email. It covers all commercial messages, which the law defines as "any electronic mail message the primary purpose of which is the commercial advertisement or promotion of a commercial product or service," including email that promotes content on commercial websites. The law makes no exception for business-to-business email. That means all email—for example, a message to former customers announcing a new product line—must comply with the law.

Each separate email in violation of the CAN-SPAM Act is subject to penalties of up to \$16,000, so non-compliance can be costly. But following the law isn't complicated. Here's a rundown of CAN-SPAM's main requirements:

1. **Don't use false or misleading header information.** Your "From," "To," "Reply-To," and routing information—including the originating domain name and email address—must be accurate and identify the person or business who initiated the message.
2. **Don't use deceptive subject lines.** The subject line must accurately reflect the content of the message.
3. **Identify the message as an ad.** The law gives you a list of leeway in how to do this, but you must disclose clearly and conspicuously that your message is an advertisement.
4. **Tell recipients where you're located.** Your message must include your valid physical postal address. This can be your current street address, a post office box you've registered with the U.S. Postal Service, or a private mailbox you've registered with a commercial mail receiving agency established under Postal Service regulations.
5. **Tell recipients how to opt out of receiving future email from you.** Your message must include a clear and conspicuous explanation of how the recipient can opt out of getting email from you in the future. Craft the notice in a way that's easy for an ordinary person to recognize, read, and understand. Creative use of type size, color, and location can improve clarity. Give a return email address or another easy Internet-based way to allow people to communicate their choice to you. You may email a menu to allow a recipient to opt out of certain types of messages, but you must include the option to stop all commercial messages from you. Make sure your spam filter doesn't block these opt-out requests.

Under the CAN-SPAM Act, businesses can be fined up to \$16,000 per email that violates the Act's guidelines.



# Are All Apples The Same?

**A**pple ([www.apple.com](http://www.apple.com)) reshaped the entire music industry with the iPod and iTunes. It's had a similar effect on mobile phones by popularizing such game-changing features as multitouch displays. And just when it appeared that for once Apple wasn't ahead of the curve when other companies made netbooks and mini notebooks all the rage, Apple unleashed the instantly lauded iPad, effectively redefining tablets as potential portable multimedia powerhouses also capable of business uses that perhaps even Apple didn't anticipate. Though Apple's success across these platforms owes a large debt to its loyal user base, the success is also strongly tied to numerous features Apple's portable devices share, including iTunes, the App Store, iOS, multitouch displays, and breathtaking designs. Still, Apple's portables aren't entirely alike. The following highlights common and different traits of the newest iPod touch, iPhone 4, and iPad.

by Blaine Flamig



## iPod Touch

8GB	\$229
32GB	\$299
64GB	\$399

> Whereas Apple's very first iPod specialized at pretty much nothing but playing digital music, the new iPod touch, introduced in September, is a jack of all multimedia trades. Other than omitting cellular phone capabilities, the new touch essentially offers the same core media, gaming, video recording, ebook, mapping, and application features as the iPhone 4 in a thinner (0.28 inches), lighter (3.56 ounces) frame. Like the iPhone 4, the new touch has a camera on its backside capable of recording HD video (up to 720p), as well as a front-facing VGA camera above the screen. You can use the cameras to make video calls via the included FaceTime software from iPod touch to iPod touch or iPod touch to iPhone 4. Both devices sport a 3.5-inch widescreen color Retina display (960 x 640) that packs 326 pixels into every inch—4X the amount previous touch models offered. Additionally, both devices integrate 802.11n Wi-Fi, Bluetooth 2.1, a built-in speaker, and a microphone. Software-wise, both support the free iBooks app to purchase, download, and read ebooks from Apple's iBookstore. Both also support Ping, a music-oriented social networking feature built into iTunes, and Game Center (to participate in multiplayer games via Wi-Fi).

## iPhone 4

**16GB** **\$199** (with two-year AT&T contract)

**32GB** **\$299** (with two-year AT&T contract)

> Unveiled in June 2010, the iPhone is billed as the world's thinnest smartphone, though its 0.37-inch thickness and 4.8-ounce weight slightly exceed the iPod touch. Beyond offering a 3G cellular connection, the iPhone 4 differs from the touch by adding a second microphone that helps cut background noise during calls and a physical Ring/Silent button. The iPhone 4 also offers Visual Voicemail to access voicemail in the order you want. The front-located camera, meanwhile, can snap 5MP (megapixel) digital images with 5X digital zoom and access to a built-in LED flash unit and HDR (High Dynamic Range) setting that combines the best elements of three photos shot at different exposures into one image. The touch and iPhone 4 share similar Mail capabilities—support for MobileMe, Yahoo! Mail, Gmail, Microsoft Exchange, and most IMAP and POP systems—but in a nod to business use, the iPhone 4 supports multiple Exchange ActiveSync accounts and other enterprise-related phone/mail features. Text messaging via Messages is also included with support for MMS (Multimedia Messaging Service). Additionally, users can tether the iPhone 4 to notebooks to share the phone's 3G connection.



COURTESY OF APPLE

## iPad

### Wi-Fi:

**16GB** **\$499** **32GB** **\$599** **64GB** **\$699**

### Wi-Fi and 3G:

**16GB** **\$629** **32GB** **\$729** **64GB** **\$829**

> Like the touch and iPhone 4, the iPad runs on Apple's A4 processor; offers an LED-backlit multitouch display; supports 720p HD video playback; integrates Bluetooth 2.1, a speaker, and a microphone; and provides support for iBooks, Mail, iTunes, Maps, and app and gaming functionality. Measuring 9.7 inches, the iPad's screen boasts a higher 1,024- x 768-pixel resolution but shares the same IPS (in-plane switching) technology the iPhone 4 uses for a 178-degree viewing angle. The 3G iPad version shares the iPhone 4's ability to Web surf via the 3G cell phone network, meaning users can download music, movies, TV shows, and ebooks right from the device just about anywhere. The iPad omits a camera, however, meaning no video calls. Additionally, though it supports thousands of apps the iPhone and iPod touch also support, only apps specifically designed for the iPad take full advantage of the larger screen. Elsewhere, the included YouTube and Photos apps offer iPad-specific features, including viewing photo albums as stacks. Special



COURTESY OF APPLE



iPad versions of Keynote (for presentations), Pages (word documents), and Numbers (spreadsheets) are also available for \$9.99 each via iTunes, with each producing files sharable with Macs and PCs. Conveniently, ebooks downloaded to the iPad are shareable with an iPhone or iPod touch.

## How To Solve Problems With Apple iTunes

Apple's iTunes ([www.itunes.com](http://www.itunes.com)) is a popular choice for organizing and playing music and other media, such as video. It includes the iTunes Store, which lets customers purchase music, videos, books, and apps (applications) that they can use via their computers and other Apple devices, including iPads, iPhones, and iPods. As with any software, iTunes sometimes encounters problems. We'll show you how to solve the most common glitches.

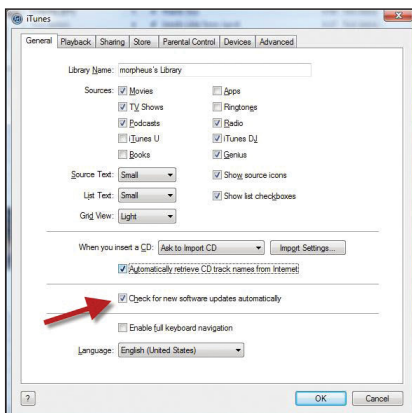
### Get Current

It is important to keep iTunes up-to-date. New versions fix security problems, add features, and fix many bugs customers encounter with the software, so it's always worthwhile to upgrade to the latest version of

iTunes before troubleshooting any problems.

If you installed iTunes with the default options, it should be checking for updates automatically. However, it's still a good idea to check for updates. In iTunes, click Help and then select Check For Updates. A window will let you know which version of the software you have and whether a newer version is available. If one is, you can start the installation from that window.

The General tab in iTunes' Preferences window lets you enable or disable the software's automatic update checking function.



**Problem:** iTunes doesn't recognize your iPad, iPhone, or iPod.

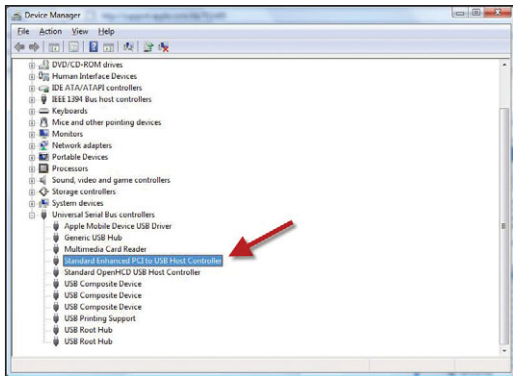
**Solution:** First, verify that your system meets the minimum requirements for using iTunes and the iPad, iPhone, or iPod. A USB port, Internet access, an iTunes Store account, and Windows XP SP3 (Service Pack 3)/Vista/7 are required to use iTunes and buy content.

Next, determine whether your security software is interfering with iTunes by disconnecting your computer from the Internet (removing the Ethernet cable from its port on your computer will do the trick), disabling the security software temporarily, and restarting iTunes. If iTunes now recognizes your iPod, it might be necessary to configure the security software not to block iTunes. Consult your security software's documentation for guidance.

Ensure your iPhone, iPad, or iPod is getting enough power. Some USB connections, particularly those on peripheral devices such as a keyboard, do not provide enough power for many gadgets. Use the primary USB ports on your computer.

Apple devices also require high-power, USB 2.0 connections, so be sure your computer has USB 2.0 ports. You can determine whether your computer has USB 2.0 ports in Device Manager. Click Start, select Run, and enter

## Tech Support



Check the Windows Device Manager to make sure your system has an Enhanced Host Controller in the Universal Serial Bus Controllers category. If it does, your PC supports USB 2.0.

**devmgmt.msc.** Press the ENTER key to start the Device Manager utility. Click the plus (+) sign next to Universal Serial Bus Controllers to expand the view. If you see Enhanced Host Controller in this list, your computer has a USB 2.0 controller. (The controller label might include the manufacturer's name, such as NEC Enhanced Host Controller.) It's also possible that a bad USB port is to blame. To see whether this is the problem, simply plug the iPod into another USB port.

Your computer needs two pieces of software to properly recognize your iPod: the Apple Mobile Device USB driver and the Apple Mobile Device service. When your iPod is plugged in, the Apple Mobile Device USB driver will be listed under Universal Serial Bus Controllers in the Device Manager. If it isn't under the Universal Serial Bus controllers section, look under some of the other sections in Device Manager. In some situations, the driver appears in another section such as Other Devices.

If you can't find the iPod's USB driver, scanning your computer for hardware changes might find it. In Device Manager, right-click Universal Serial Bus Controller, then select Scan For Hardware Changes. Once you see the Apple Mobile Device USB driver, update it. Right-click Apple Mobile

Device USB driver, then Update Driver Software.

As a last resort, reinstall iTunes. The directions for reinstalling iTunes are detailed in the solution to the next problem.

**Problem:** You receive a "This iPod cannot be used because the required software is not installed" error message.

**Solution:** If your PC displays a message indicating that it doesn't have the correct software, read the error message carefully. If you've downloaded and installed the wrong version of iTunes for your operating system, it will often tell you in the error message. You can uninstall iTunes and then install the appropriate version.

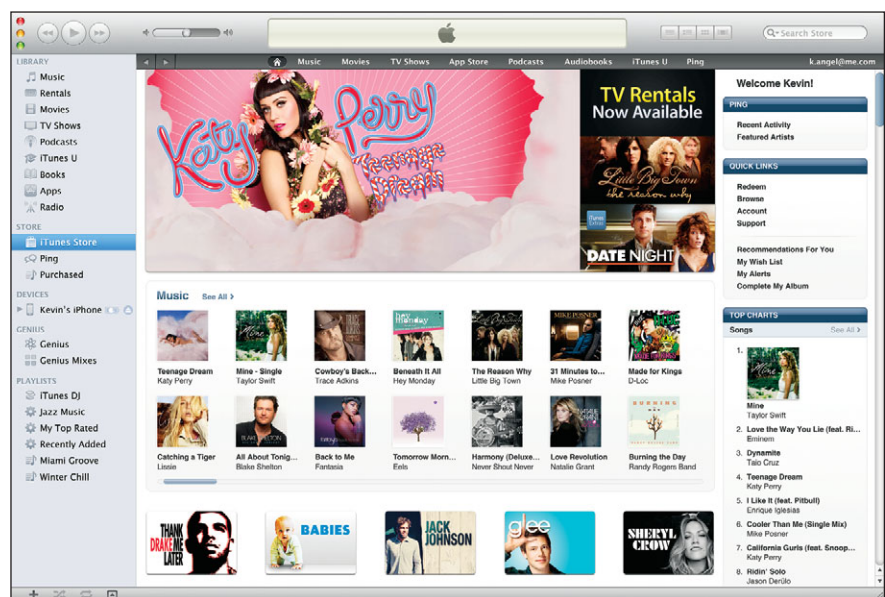
To remove iTunes in WinXP, first quit iTunes. Click Start and select Control Panel. Double-click Add Or Remove Programs. Select iTunes from the list and click Remove. Click Yes when asked if you want to remove iTunes. If there are other iTunes entries in the Add Or Remove Programs list, remove those before you restart the computer. After all versions of iTunes

and iPod updater programs have been removed, restart your computer.

To remove iTunes in Vista/7, quit iTunes. Click Start, then select Control Panel. In Control Panel, click Uninstall A Program. Select iTunes from the list, then click Uninstall. As with WinXP, don't restart, yet. Remove any other iTunes entries.

If you get a "Cannot delete iPod Service.exe: It is being used by another person or program" message, confirm that iTunes and the iPod Updater utility are not open. If they are, exit the programs and try the uninstall again. If neither program is running, it will be necessary to shut down the iPod service manually. Press CTRL-ALT-DELETE. Click Start Task Manager. Click the Processes tab and then select iPodService.exe from the Processes list. Click the End Process button. This will terminate the iPodService. Try uninstalling iTunes again.

After uninstalling iTunes, restart your computer. Now, it's time to reinstall iTunes. Visit [www.itunes.com](http://www.itunes.com). Click Download iTunes, then select either the standard version or (if you have a 64-bit version of Windows), iTunes for Windows (64-bit). Next, click



iTunes is a sturdy program and has been around for years, so it's not surprising that the kinks have long since been worked out. If you keep it up-to-date, you can expect to rarely encounter glitches.

Download Now. Once the download is complete, locate the downloaded file on your computer. Double-click the file to start the installation. Once installed, iTunes should recognize your iPod.

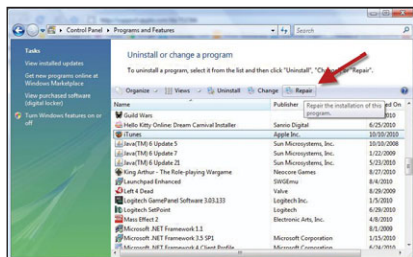
**Problem:** iTunes doesn't recognize your CDs.

**Solution:** Sometimes iTunes doesn't detect a CD when you put it in your optical drive. If this happens, try the following steps to resolve the problem.

If you have more than one optical drive, try the other device. Also, put the CD into a different computer or CD player to make sure that the CD isn't the problem.

If the CD is working fine, it's time to take a look at your CD or DVD drive. Check for driver updates for your optical drive. Check your computer manufacturer's Web site or, if you purchased the drive separately, the drive manufacturer's Web site. To determine your drive's manufacturer and model number, open the Device Manager: Click Start, enter **devmgmt.msc** in the Search Programs And Files box, and then press the ENTER key. Click the plus (+) sign next to DVD/CD-ROM Drives to see the model info. If this label doesn't indicate who manufactured the device, enter the label in a search engine. Finally, visit the manufacturer's Web site and download and install any appropriate software updates.

It's possible you might have a software conflict. Apple says Napster, Audible, and other music store software sometimes causes conflicts with iTunes. Try removing any suspect software.



To repair iTunes, select iTunes from the Uninstall Or Change A Program list and then click the Repair button.

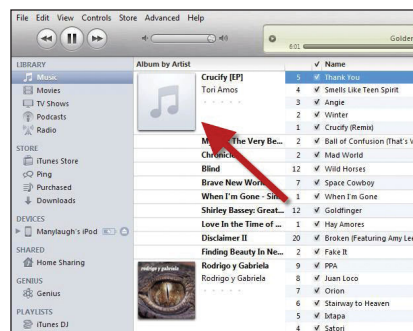
If iTunes still doesn't recognize your CDs, try repairing the installation of iTunes. First, quit iTunes. In Vista/7, click Start and then select Control Panel. Next, click Uninstall A Program, then select iTunes from the list. Click Repair.

In WinXP, click Start, then select Control Panel. Double-click Add Or Remove Programs. Select iTunes from the list and click Remove. This will bring up the InstallShield Wizard. Select Repair and follow the prompts. With WinXP, it is necessary to restart your computer.

**Problem:** When you import the music from your CDs to your iTunes library, iTunes doesn't display album artwork and track titles

**Solution:** First, check to see if iTunes is configured to look for song titles. In iTunes, click Edit and then select Preferences. Click the General tab. Make sure that the box next to Automatically Retrieve CD Track Names From The Internet is checked.

To get any missing album artwork currently in your iTunes library, click Advanced and then select Get Album Artwork. To get missing track titles, click Advanced, then select Get Track Names. iTunes will then use Gracenote to look up album artwork and song titles. There are limitations to the Gracenote database. The Gracenote database is extensive, and it will have artwork and song titles for most



iTunes typically displays album artwork when you rip CDs to your computer. If the artwork section is empty, you may need to configure iTunes to import the images.

popular music, but smaller sales and secondary market CDs are probably not going to be found in Gracenote. The CD you and your garage band made won't be in Gracenote.

**Problem:** iTunes repeatedly prompts you to authorize your computer for playbacks.

**Solution:** You can probably solve this problem by using a Windows Administrator account to authorize the computer to use your Apple ID. To do this, close iTunes, then switch to an administrator account. (Click Start, click the arrow next to Shut Down, and then click Switch User. Then sign in to an administrator account.) Start iTunes. From the main menu, click Store. Select Authorize This Computer. Use your Apple ID and password to authorize the computer. Log out of the administrator account and log back in to the account you normally use.

If that doesn't fix the problem, you may want to try turning off UAC (User Account Control), which is a security measure that is meant to stop malicious programs from running on your computer. Turning it off reduces your computer's ability to defend itself, but may solve the problem. In Vista and Win7, click Start, then select Control Panel. Click User Accounts And Family Safety (in Win7, User Accounts). Click User Accounts. In Vista, click "Turn User Account Controls On Or Off." In Windows 7, click Change User Account Control Settings. Restart your computer and then authorize iTunes again.

Also, ensure you're using the right iTunes account. If you bought songs under one iTunes account and authorized your PC under another, it will cause this problem. Right-click a song in your iTunes library. Select Get Info. Confirm that the Account Name associated with the song is the same one you used to authorize the computer. Solve the problem by authorizing the PC with the account you used to purchase the song. ■

BY RON KEITH

# EXAMINING ERRORS

COMPILED BY NATHAN LAKE

**Error messages** rarely provide clear explanations of the problems they represent. Some are riddled with technical jargon. Others have seemingly indecipherable codes. And some tell you exactly what the problem is but don't tell you how to solve it.

Each month, we take the mystery out of error messages that flummox our readers. Every solution includes the message in its original form, a plain-English translation of that message, and step-by-step instructions for solving the problem.

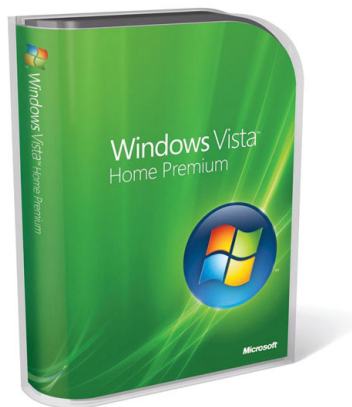
If you have questions about an error message, email us ([errormessages@smartcomputing.com](mailto:errormessages@smartcomputing.com)), and we'll try to decipher it. Tell us what version of Windows you are using, give the full text of the error message, and provide as many details in your email as possible. Volume prohibits individual replies.

## WINDOWS VISTA

### Error Waiting For Explorer.exe playing logoff sound.

**Translation:** This error can occur when you attempt to shut down Windows Vista. A pop-up window asks if you want to Force Log Off or Cancel. If you select Force Log Off, the computer will shut down, while Cancel will bring you back into Vista.

**Solution:** Microsoft indicates that this error message can occur if the WAV file that plays when you exit Windows is longer than 10 seconds. To fix the issue, you'll need to select a shorter sound effect or remove the Exit Windows sound. Click the Start button, type **Sound** in the Start Search box, and click Sound. Select the Sounds tab and scroll down to the Exit Windows option.



Click the Browse button and choose a sound effect that plays for less than 10 seconds. You can test a sound by selecting it, clicking Open, and clicking the Test button. If you'd rather hear no sound at all, click the Sounds drop-down menu and choose None.

If the error continues to occur, you may have a problem with Explorer.exe. Click the Start button, select All Programs, and choose Accessories. Right-click the Command Prompt option and select Run As Administrator. If necessary, provide User Account Control authorization. In the Command Prompt window, type **sfc /scannow** and press ENTER. A scan will begin, and the window will indicate a percentage of how much of the scan has been performed. If any of the files need to be replaced, Windows will ask for your installation DVD. **I**

## INTERNET EXPLORER

### Error Internet Explorer is not responding.

**Translation:** This error often occurs when you're streaming video in Internet Explorer.

**Solution:** To help you diagnose what's causing the problem, Microsoft provides an Automated Troubleshooting Services software utility that runs a troubleshooting test and automatically disables any codecs that may make Internet Explorer unstable. You can download Automated Troubleshooting Services by visiting [www.support.microsoft.com/fixit](http://www.support.microsoft.com/fixit) and clicking the Internet Explorer tab on the left side of the page. Under the Internet Explorer Performance section, click the Playing Video Files Crashes Or Freezes Internet Explorer Or Windows link. Click the Run Now button and save the utility to your PC. When it finishes downloading, click the Run button and



select Run. Follow the Codec window's instructions to complete the test. If Automated Troubleshooting Services discovers the problem, the utility will help you take the appropriate measures to fix the issue. **I**

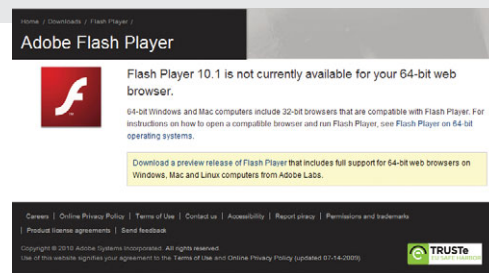
## WINDOWS 7 & ADOBE FLASH

### Error

**This page requires Adobe Flash Player.**

**Translation:** If you don't have Adobe Flash Player installed, you probably see this error whenever you open a Web site with video. But some Windows 7 users have had trouble installing Flash because Win7 includes both a 32-bit and 64-bit version of Internet Explorer; Adobe Flash can't be installed on the 64-bit version of IE.

**Solution:** To view Flash-based video in IE, you'll want to make sure that you run the 32-bit version of IE. If you open IE from the Start menu in Win7, click the option titled Internet Explorer, rather than the Internet Explorer (64-bit) option. If you open Internet Explorer from the Taskbar, you may need to delete the IE icon from the Taskbar and pin a



link to the 32-bit version of IE. To do so, click the Start button, select All Programs, right-click Internet Explorer, and select Pin To Taskbar.

If you still see the error and you're running the 32-bit version of IE and have downloaded Flash, Adobe suggests that you uninstall the existing Flash utility and visit [get.adobe.com/flashplayer](http://get.adobe.com/flashplayer) to download a clean installation of the newest version of Flash. ■

## WINDOWS MEDIA CENTER

### Error

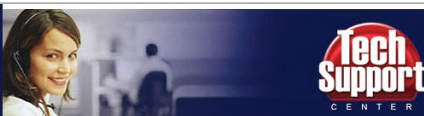
**Tuner In Use.**

**Translation:** You may see this error if you've set up and configured your PC to watch and record live TV. It's possible that the TV tuner may be in use by another application, such as Windows Media Player or a third-party media player such as iMEDIAN, or it could mean that Windows Media Center is currently recording a program. If you have a dual TV tuner (one that supports the playback and recording of two channels at one time), you may have multiple recordings happening at the same time.

**Solution:** If you want to watch a live program that you're not currently recording, you'll need to stop the programs that are currently recording or exit the application that's using your TV tuner. Note that with third-party PVR (personal video recorder) software, the application may still use the TV tuner to record programming, even when the application is not open in the Windows Taskbar. Thus, you may need to open the PVR software using the TV tuner and quit the recording.



If you only use Windows Media Center to record TV shows, look through the built-in guide for Windows Media Center (from the Start screen, scroll to TV and click Guide) and check which programs are currently recording. To cancel a recording, simply click the channel you want to watch and Windows Media Center will offer to stop the recording and bring up the channel you selected. ■



## Error Messages Online

### Error Messages

If you're getting a specific error message, this is the place to start.

[Browse Error Messages Alphabetically](#) (Try this first.)  
[Search By Error Message Text](#)



Don't see your error message here? Visit the *Smart Computing* Tech Support Center ([www.smartcomputing.com/techsupport](http://www.smartcomputing.com/techsupport)) to search our database of common error messages and PC problems.

# SOFTWARE UPDATES

COMPILED BY NATHAN LAKE

When it comes to protecting your software, installing the latest updates is one of the most important steps you can take. Software updates fix bugs, plug security holes, and sometimes even add new features. Here are the updates you should know about this month.

## Microsoft Office 2010 & 2007 Suites

**Update:** The definition updates for Office 2007 and 2010 improve the Junk Email Filter found in Microsoft Office Outlook to improve which unread messages Outlook places in the Junk folder. The update is available for both Office 2010 and Office 2007 editions.

**Installation:** To install this update, go to [www.microsoft.com](http://www.microsoft.com) and type the KB number corresponding to the version of Office you use in the search field. Those running Microsoft Office 2010 will need to enter **KB982726**, while people running Office 2007 should type **KB2291599**. If you run Microsoft Office 2010, you'll notice that both 32-bit and 64-bit packages are listed in the search results. By default, Office 2010 installs as a 32-bit application, so you should download the 32-bit update—unless you've chosen to install the 64-bit edition.

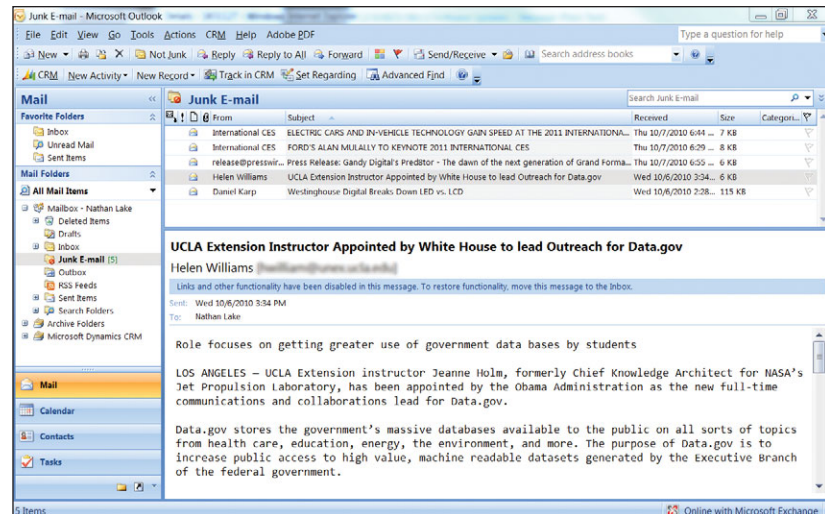
To determine whether your PC is running a 64-bit edition of Office 2010, open Office 2010 Word or Excel. Select the File menu and click the Help tab. On the right pane, look for the version type in the About Microsoft Word section.

Once you've selected the appropriate download, click the Download button and save the file to your hard drive. Locate the file and double-click it to begin installing the update.

[www.microsoft.com](http://www.microsoft.com)

## Microsoft Outlook 2007

**Update:** A recent security patch for Microsoft Office 2007 is designed to



Microsoft's new Junk E-mail folder is better at differentiating between emails that are spam.

fix vulnerabilities in Outlook 2007 that could run malicious programs if the file is opened. Specifically, the vulnerability affects PCs with a Microsoft Outlook account that's tied to an Exchange Server, which is what most businesses use to secure and share email in the company. If your Outlook account is connected to your work email, Microsoft suggests that you apply this update immediately.

**Installation:** Before you install the update, note that your Office 2007 copy should be upgraded to Service Pack 2, or the security patch won't install. Next, open up your Web browser, visit [www.microsoft.com](http://www.microsoft.com), type **KB2288953** in the search field, and press ENTER. Once you've selected the right download, click the Download button and save the file to your hard drive. Locate the file and double-click it to begin installing the update.

[www.microsoft.com](http://www.microsoft.com)

## Adobe Premiere Pro CS5

**Update:** The 5.0.2 update for Premiere Pro CS5 is ideal for people with desktop PCs that feature Nvidia graphics cards, because it improves an Nvidia graphics card's ability to render video using Adobe's Mercury Playback Engine, which is the code Adobe uses to quickly play back Premiere Pro CS5 content. This update also adds support for XD-CAM-HD export, the Broadcast WAV format, and the latest Adobe Color Science.

**Installation:** To download this update, open Premiere Pro CS5, click the Help menu, and select Updates. Alternatively, you could visit [tiny.cc/2dbcp](http://tiny.cc/2dbcp) and select Adobe Premiere Pro CS5 5.0.2 Update. Note that there are two download options: one for those who installed the program via electronic download and one for those who installed it from the retail DVD. Click Proceed To Download

and then click Download Now. Save the downloaded file and click Run when the download finishes. Follow the on-screen instructions to update Premiere Pro CS5 to version 5.0.2.

[www.adobe.com](http://www.adobe.com)

## Corel WinDVD Pro 2010

**Update:** Service Pack 3 for Corel WinDVD Pro 2010 offers a variety of new video effects for WinDVD 2010 Pro, including Cinema Enhancement,

De-Snow, De-Block, Sharpness, and Smart Stretch. The new effects are applied using your graphics card—whether you run an Nvidia, AMD, or Intel graphics processor—so that WinDVD Pro 2010 won't additionally tax your CPU. Corel notes that the number of video effects you can run at one time may vary depending on the quality of your graphics processor.

**Installation:** This update can be found by visiting [www.corel.com](http://www.corel.com), selecting

the Support tab, and clicking Patches And Updates. Select WinDVD 2010 and click the Download button for WinDVD Pro 2010 Service Pack 3. Scroll down to the section titled Quick Instructions and click the Begin Download link. Save the file to your PC and when the download finishes, click the Run button. Follow the installation wizard's instructions, review the Software License Agreement, and click Finish to install the update.

[www.corel.com](http://www.corel.com)

## UPDATE OF THE MONTH

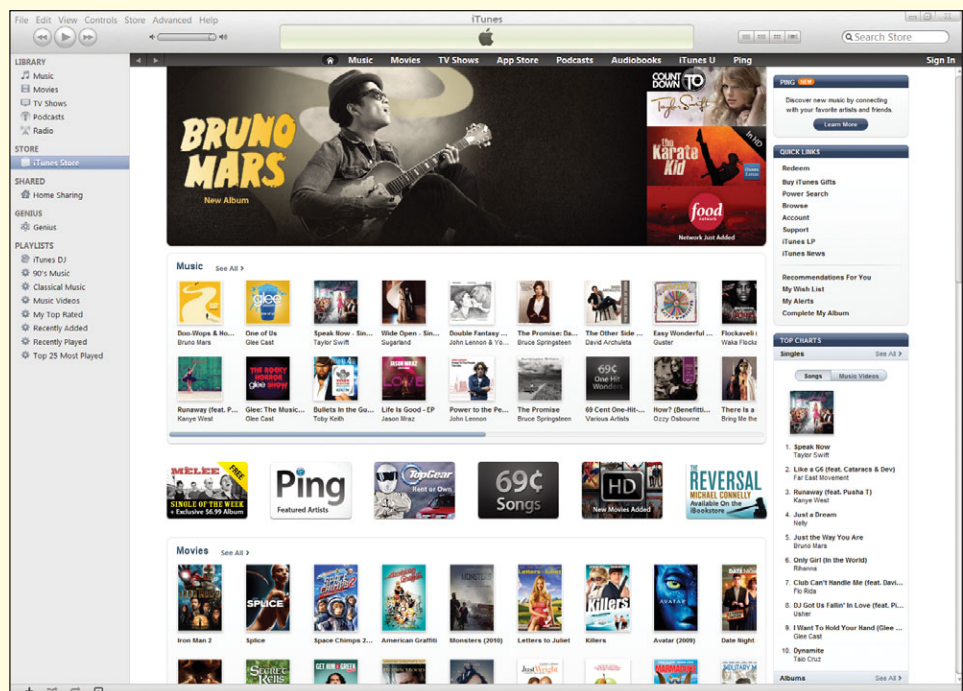
### iTunes 10

**Update:** Version 10 adds a few new and interesting features to iTunes. At the top of the list is the introduction of Ping, which is an optional social networking tool where you and your friends can follow, view, and comment on music purchases. iTunes 10 also gives you the ability to rent TV shows—recorded in HD—for 99 cents, and you can watch the content on your PC, iPhone, or iPod touch. Another new feature of iTunes 10 is that you can stream music over your wireless network using Apple's AirPlay (a communication standard that will be built into some wireless speakers, A/V receivers, and iPod accessories).

**Installation:** If you already have iTunes installed on your PC, simply open iTunes and it will use your Internet connection to check for and find the newest iTunes update. Click the Download iTunes button and in the Apple Software Update window, select the Apple products you'd like to update, and click the Install

button. If you need to download iTunes, visit [www.itunes.com](http://www.itunes.com) and click the Download iTunes button in the upper-right corner of the iTunes Web site. At the Download iTunes Now Web page, click the Download Now button and save the file. When the download is finished, click the Run button and follow the on-screen instructions.

[www.apple.com](http://www.apple.com)



iTunes 10 includes a number of interesting new features.

# Q&A

***Need help with your hardware or software? Looking for simple explanations on technical subjects? Send us your questions!***

Get straight answers to your technical questions from *Smart Computing*. Send your questions, along with a phone and/or fax number, so we can call you if necessary, to: *Smart Computing* Q&A, P.O. Box 85380, Lincoln, NE 68501, or email us at [q&a@smartcomputing.com](mailto:q&a@smartcomputing.com). Please include all version numbers for the software about which you're inquiring, operating system information, and any relevant information about your system. (Volume prohibits individual replies.)



### Utilities

**Q** One morning, I woke my 1-year-old computer up from the Sleep mode. Now, when I try to use Yahoo! Messenger, I can send messages but not receive them. Also, at the same time, I cannot sign in to Windows Live Messenger and because of that, do not get notices when I receive email. I have Comcast broadband and have the Norton Security Suite installed, along with several other malware and spyware programs. Norton runs in the background and is updated every day, and I have run all of my security programs, but they are not showing any infections or problems. I also received several emails that were returned saying "Delivery Status Notification (Failure)," and it showed that there were attachments included. However, I did not send any of them, nor did I open any of the attachments. Do you have any idea or solutions as to what is causing this

**problem, or can you recommend a program that I could run to fix it?**

**A** Our first recommendation would be to completely restart your computer. It's not uncommon for some applications to have issues when computers are put in Sleep or Hibernate mode.

If restarting your computer doesn't resolve the problem, another avenue to pursue is whether Norton Security Suite is blocking full access to the Internet. Try disabling NSS completely to see if that gives you access to Windows Live Messenger. If so, then gradually enable its features, one by one, testing after each change. Our hunch is that NSS (or a conflict between it and one of the security programs you didn't name) is the most likely explanation for the connectivity issues, especially if you've scanned your system thoroughly for malware and viruses. ■



### Online

**Q** Recently, while I was making UK travel accommodations for an upcoming trip, somebody was able to access my email distribution list. This hacker then sent an email to the email addresses in my distribution list stating that I was stranded in the UK and requesting that the recipients send money to a London address so that I could return to the United States. Fortunately, all the people who received the email recognized that it was a scam and did not respond. My question is: How was this hacker able to access my email distribution list, and how can I avoid this in the future? My computer system consists of Windows 7, and I use Outlook Express and have a Hotmail account. I regularly update my security software and run scans every two to three days.

**A** Odds are the hacker used one of two ways to gain access to your address book. The hacker may have used a virus or other piece of malware sent to you that exploited a security hole in your PC. Or, the hacker may have broken into your Hotmail account (by guessing or otherwise obtaining your password).

Fortunately, in your case, no damage was done. The next step is to change the password on your Hotmail account so that the malicious user can't open it again. Use a password that has lowercase and uppercase characters, as well as numbers and symbols, for a strong password. Then, sanitize your computer and lock it down so that you don't have a repeat occurrence in the future. We'll show you how.

First, go to [housecall.trendmicro.com](http://housecall.trendmicro.com) and perform an online scan of your system.

This will remove anything that slipped by your existing security software. (HouseCall is free and may be a little slower than using a standalone application that's installed directly on your computer.) Follow any corrective action recommended by HouseCall.

Next, make sure that you're updating all of your software with any necessary security

updates. In your case, this includes updates for Windows, Internet Explorer, and Outlook Express. (We would also recommend updating your security software, but you mentioned that you regularly do that.) Microsoft continually addresses flaws in its software on a routine basis; patches are distributed on a monthly basis, but critical flaws are often patched more quickly. **I**



### Online

**Q** My problem is with Windows Live Mail downloading the same messages on two computers, my desktop and my netbook. When downloading messages to read on the netbook, those same messages will later be downloaded to the desktop when I start Live Mail to read the email on the desktop. The reverse is not true when reading messages on the desktop; those same messages are *not* downloaded to the netbook. The desktop is hard-wired to a wireless router, while the netbook uses a wireless connection from my router. I have checked the netbook when connected via hard wire to the router, with the results being the same. At no time has this occurred when using my laptop.

**A** Email systems are generally one of two types: POP (Post Office Protocol) or IMAP (Internet Message Access Protocol). When you access a POP email account, you download your emails to your computer, and when completed, send a message to the POP server to delete those emails off the server. With an IMAP email account, the messages always reside on the IMAP server, and you access them the same as you would a Web site; the emails will reside on the IMAP server until you explicitly delete them. IMAP email accounts are ideal for users with multiple computers; POP works better for users with a single computer.

POP does allow you to leave copies of the messages on the server after you've downloaded them with a mail client such as Live Mail. We suspect that Live Mail is configured this way on your netbook. That would explain why you are able to read the emails a second time on your desktop.

To check your settings, launch Windows Live Mail, click Tools, and select Accounts. Highlight your email account and click Properties. Click the Advanced tab. Under the Delivery section, there's an option called Leave A Copy Of Messages On Server.

Here is where you have to decide how you want to access your email. If you only want to read your email from one computer, you'll need to make sure this box is unchecked. If you want to read your email from all of your computers, you'll need to check this box on each computer you use.

With a POP email account, accessing mail from multiple computers can be problematic. Because there's no way to synchronize your email status (basically, whether you've read an email), you end up playing "catch-up" whenever you access your email with a seldom used computer.

You didn't mention your email provider; many ISPs (Internet service providers) offer both POP and IMAP simultaneously. If you're using Google's Gmail, you can access it via browser, IMAP, or POP. **I**

# ACTION EDITOR

Are you having trouble finding a product or getting adequate service from a manufacturer? If so, we want to help solve your problem. Send us a description of the product you're seeking or the problem you're having with customer service. In billing disputes, include relevant information (such as account numbers or screen names for online services) and photocopies of checks. Include your phone number in case we need to contact you.

Letters may be edited for length and clarity; volume prohibits individual replies.



**Write to:**  
**Action Editor**  
**P.O. Box 85380**  
**Lincoln, NE 68501-5380**

**Or send an email to:**  
**actioneditor@smart**  
**computing.com**

**Or fax us at:**  
**(402) 479-2104**

## Blog Access & A Locked Hard Drive

**I have had a blog on Blogger for several years. When I changed Internet providers the last time, I had to have one of Google's humans change my email over to the new provider and make sure the password was valid. That account was with our current Internet provider—WildBlue, a satellite service. My email address with WildBlue is still valid but may not be much longer. I couldn't access the blog with that account in the past few months. I'm in the process of changing Internet providers again, so I opened a Google account. I tried to find out how to change the email on the Blogger account and went through dozens of Google screens trying to do so, but in vain. Could you help?**

**James B.**  
**Dayton, Tenn.**  
 .....

Changing a Blogger account's email address is supposed to be pretty straightforward, but as James discovered, sometimes the directions you really need are buried beneath multiple pages, and there are seemingly no humans around to help out. We contacted a Google representative who tracked down the exact instructions and provided a link directly to them. She also included her email address, in case James still had trouble and needed to contact an actual human. Thankfully, the instructions—once located—were clear enough, and James now has access to his blog.

**Several months ago, I purchased from Best Buy a Western Digital My Passport external hard**

**drive to back up the files on my computer. I still have my receipt. I just discovered that the device won't recognize my password anymore. (No, I did not forget my password; yes, I did try it several times; yes, I rebooted my computer and tried again, several times.) My laptop is the only computer the drive was ever used with. After I backed up my files, I did have the laptop's hard drive wiped and reformatted. Afterward, I tested to see if I could still get into the WD external drive and was successful. I keep the external drive in its case in a drawer in my bedroom closet—no problems with dust, heat/cold, humidity, movement, or jolting. I needed to use the external drive last week and couldn't get into it. I need a solution. The drive contains valuable personal data.**

**Kelly L.**  
**Runnemede, N.J.**  
 .....

Password protection is a double-edged sword: A good, strong password will protect your data from just about anyone—including you, if you happen to lose or forget the password. Or, as in this case, if some technical mishap renders the protected drive inaccessible. We spoke with the folks at Western Digital and explained Kelly's predicament. One of the company's reps called Kelly and offered, as a one-time courtesy, to collect the drive (at no charge to Kelly) and to hand it over to a third-party data recovery firm (also at no charge). Data recovery from such firms is not guaranteed, but they're very good at what they do, so we expect that most or all of Kelly's data will be returned to him in readable form. **I**

# 2010 Holiday Gift Guide

## STUFF YOU'LL LOVE TO GIVE (OR RECEIVE)

**F**ew *Smart Computing* articles generate as much hubbub among hardware and software vendors as our annual Gift Guide. Here's proof: This year we received our first pitch in July.

The holidays approacheth with their message of peace, love, and commerce. Time to stuff your halls with holly, regift last year's fruitcake, and ponder the presents you'll be giving to your

loved ones. Or, in a more practical vein, to ponder the presents you hope they'll be giving you.

In any event, whether you're shopping for others or making a list for

yourself, this is the place to be. Our main gift guide, "Under The Tree," begins on page 86. It's like a velvet swag bag, packed by elves, overstuffed with merchandise we wouldn't mind unwrapping ourselves (was that too unsubtle?). And on page 90, you can wrap your toes around a stack of goodies with "Stocking Stuffers."

### The Spin In '10

Speaking from a spending standpoint, this holiday season portends to



BY MARTY SEMS

be much like last year's, according to those in the know. Although very few of us intend to outspend our 2009 selves—and nearly a third of us plan to spend less this year, according to NPD Group—forecasters predict a couple of percentage points' growth in holiday spending over last year.

So what will we geeks be spending our money on? Well, when it comes to the gizmos and gadgets we love, the big sellers will apparently be portable devices. Tablets such as the iPad, smartphones such as the iPhone 4 and Android models, and electronic book readers such as

Amazon's Kindle should all go under wraps until the big days arrive.

Electronics as a category placed fifth on NPD Group's list of the top gifts for the season. Interestingly, books weighed in at number four, and as you may have heard, ebooks recently outsold hardcover editions.

Big-ticket items such as HDTVs probably won't sell as well as they did last year, despite new features such as Internet connectivity and 3D video support.

Computers likewise may not make it under as many trees this season. Those that do, however, stand a good

chance of being tablets with colorful, inviting touchscreens.

Of course, for the typical *Smart Computing* reader, gifts for current computer users aren't all that hard to think up. Home users and small business owners often appreciate blank CD or DVD media, memory cards for digital cameras, soft cases, and other useful stuff from the periphery of the PC. And hey, don't forget to check your inbox for money-saving coupon codes.

So relax. Shop with a smile. Enjoy the wonders of the season, and try not to think about the bills of January. ■



# Under The Tree

## Cool Holiday Gifts For The Techie In Your Life

**H**ere at *Smart Computing*, we get to play with goodies. Lots of goodies. Computers, monitors, flash drives, cameras. . . . Whatever the tool or toy, we spend time testing it, comparing it, having fun with it. (And they pay us to do this! What a great job.) And as we play and test and compare and discuss, we can't help but pick out our favorites—the stuff that we would buy if we were in the market for a case, a monitor, a dock, or whatever. And here they are—our favorite tech goodies, just in time for the holidays. You know, in case you're seeking a gift for your favorite writer . . . er, relative or loved one.

BY ROD SCHER

### IDAPT i4 | \$59.99 • Inoitolos | [www.idaptweb.com](http://www.idaptweb.com)

Available in 10 cool colors, the IDAPT i4 universal charger is a very slick gadget that can charge up to four mobile devices at one time. We have lots of mobile devices floating around our offices—and the IDAPT i4 is compatible with over 4,000 of them, including smartphones, MP3 players, GPS (global positioning system) units, cameras, and others. (Yes, your iPhone and iPod are covered.) LEDs (light-emitting diodes) indicate the charging status of each device. There's also a USB charging port for use with devices that get a charge out of connecting that way. You can even use it to recharge AA and AAA batteries. Universal and European power cables are also available, in case you're planning a holiday jaunt to Paris or Madrid.



### LifeCam Studio

\$99.95 • Microsoft  
[www.microsoft.com](http://www.microsoft.com)

This is not your father's Web cam—assuming that your father had a Web cam. The LifeCam Studio is the first one we've seen with a 1080p high-def sensor and a glass lens for superior image quality. No more tiny, grainy Web cam images. And no more fuzzy sound, either, thanks to a hi-fi microphone. Onboard software helps ensure smooth video and accurate colors in almost all lighting conditions. If you'd like to mount the cam on a tripod, you can, because it includes a tripod thread. The LifeCam Studio comes with Windows Live Movie Maker (Windows Vista/7 users only), Windows Live Photo Gallery, and a very cool Windows Live Call button (Windows Vista/7 users only) that you can use to initiate a video call using Windows Live Messenger, Yahoo!, AOL Instant Messenger, or Skype.

## Holiday Gift Guide

### CarMD

**\$98.99 • CarMD.com**

[www.carmd.com](http://www.carmd.com)



If you have a 1996 or newer car, truck, van, or SUV, you'll love this. Newer vehicles include a DLC, or data link connection, into which your mechanic plugs his diagnostic computer to find out how your car is doing, why the Check Engine light is on, etc. Now, you can do the same thing—no more waiting for a mechanic to tell you what the problem is, and no more paying a diagnostic fee just to find out that nothing's really wrong with your vehicle. CarMD is fun and easy to use: Just plug the handheld computer into the DLC, jot down the resulting code, and go to the CarMD Web site to look up the latest info on that code. CarMD reports on the status of dozens of systems, including cruise control, ECM (engine control module), oxygen sensor, catalytic converter, and more. It's an awesome gift for any car owner on your list.



### Duo-i plus iPod/iPhone Dock

**\$249.99 • Boston Acoustics**

[www.bostonacoustics.com](http://www.bostonacoustics.com)

The Duo-i plus, available in high-gloss white or black, is a sleek tabletop radio that includes dual alarms and a sleep timer. It makes a great bedside radio, mainly because it automatically adjusts its display to ambient light and because you can trigger the alarm's Snooze function by touching the device almost anywhere; yep, just reach out blindly and you're bound to get another few minutes' sleep. But the coolest thing of all is that you can connect your iPod or iPhone to the Duo-i plus; when you do, it charges your mobile device while letting you use the included remote control to play music through the system. Your digital music never sounded so good.



### Internet Security 2011

**\$79.95 • Kaspersky Lab**

[usa.kaspersky.com](http://usa.kaspersky.com)

OK, so Internet security isn't really very exciting. Neither are door locks, but let's face it, you need 'em, and it's best if they're well-built and functional. Well, Kaspersky Internet Security is just that: strong, well-built, and easy to use. It's one of our favorite security suites and possibly the most complete that we've seen: It includes an effective but easily configured firewall, real-time protection against just about any threat, and easy-to-use parental controls. We reviewed this in the September issue, and we loved it. It generates a wide variety of understandable reports, and it's easy to use and very effective. Most of all, we loved the fact that, in spite of its power, it's a nimble app that doesn't bog down your system.



### Smart Kase V2 | \$49.99 • ZooGue | [www.zoogue.com](http://www.zoogue.com)

Your iPad was expensive, so you don't want to scrimp on a case. There are many good cases out there, and the ZooGue is one of our favorites. Made of real leather, the ZooGue looks great while it protects your iPad. It adjusts to any angle, and hook-and-loop fasteners securely anchor the case for optimum viewing and superb stability. The strap can be used to hold the front panel closed, which helps protect your iPad's gorgeous screen; flip the strap around and you can even mount the iPad on an auto seat headrest so that your passengers can watch a movie while you drive. Really, there's nothing extraordinary about ZooGue; it's just a simple idea well-executed—it works well, looks great, and doesn't cost an arm and a leg.

## Holiday Gift Guide



### ◀ COOLPIX S80 | \$329.95 • Nikon | [www.nikonusa.com](http://www.nikonusa.com)

The COOLPIX S80 is a very slim 14.1MP (megapixel) point-and-shoot that's easy to use but which nonetheless offers some pretty sophisticated features. The OLED (organic LED) touch panel is bright and clear, displaying sharp images while letting you control the camera by touching the panel instead of pushing buttons and spinning dials. The 5X wide-angle zoom is great for close-ups and landscapes. The macro setting lets you shoot as close as 2.8 inches, and the camera's high ISO rating means you can shoot clearer, sharper images even in low light. A five-way image stabilization system helps avoid blurry photos. The COOLPIX S80 records 720p HD (high-definition) video with stereo sound, and in-camera editing makes enhancing your photos a breeze. Definitely one of the coolest cameras we've seen.

### ▶ Cobra Brief L

**\$255 • booq**  
[www.booqbags.com](http://www.booqbags.com)

The booq Cobra line of laptop bags is stylish but sturdy. We're sticklers about taking care of our gear, so we don't think \$255 is too much to spend on solid protection, especially when it looks this good. This particular Cobra bag holds a MacBook Pro or any notebook up to 16.4 inches. It weighs 5.4 pounds; includes a rubber-coated, weather-proof zipper; and is made of 1680 denier ballistic nylon exterior with a water-repellant coating. This is a durable bag that includes a plush lining for extra protection and a water-resistant rubberized bottom to protect your laptop. Each bag includes a serial number, so if the bag is lost, the folks at booq may be able to help reunite you with your case and its contents.



### VAIO Signature P Series Lifestyle PC

**\$1,499 • Sony**  
[www.sonystyle.com](http://www.sonystyle.com)

This laptop is what Sony calls a "lifestyle" PC, but we call it gorgeous—and perfect for home users or traveling businesspersons. At 1.3 pounds and less than an inch thick, you can put this little powerhouse in your bag or purse and never even know it's there until you need it. In spite of its size, it offers a wealth of features, including a built-in Web cam, two USB ports, a 256GB solid-state drive, GPS, Wi-Fi, and Ethernet. The P Series machines have multi-card reader slots, onboard Intel graphics, and are rated at about 4.5 hours of battery life (with the display at standard brightness). The 2GHz Intel Atom processor is plenty powerful enough for most home, business, and school-related apps. Sony's P Series systems come with Windows 7 Home Premium 32-bit.

### ▶ Wet Circuits

**\$70 • Shohero Technologies**  
[www.wetcircuits.com](http://www.wetcircuits.com)

Now, don't laugh. First, stop and think about the last time your basement office flooded. Or you knocked that 32-ounce vat of coffee onto the floor. Or a wayward "sippy cup" ended up against a floorboard.

Generally, dumping water onto or anywhere near a power strip is no laughing matter; in fact, it's almost always a recipe for disaster. Not this time, though—not with the Wet Circuits power strip. The Wet Circuits power strip is guaranteed to be water resistant, child safe, and protected against overheating and sparks. No, you can't use it underwater, but, according to Shohero, you can spray water on or near it and not worry about being electrocuted, which is a nice change.



## Holiday Gift Guide



### ▲ VX2450wm LCD Monitor

**\$368 • ViewSonic**

[store.viewsonic.com](http://store.viewsonic.com)

For the money, this ViewSonic 24-inch LCD monitor is hard to beat. In addition to its size, this 16:9 wide display features an LED backlight, a native HD resolution of 1,920 x 1,080, a 5ms response time, and a 20,000,000:1 contrast ratio. It automatically adjusts to 4:3 input, so there's no need to fuss with aspect ratios when switching inputs. Available in a piano black finish, the display can be mounted on any VESA-compliant stand or wall mount bracket. The VX2450wm includes digital and analog inputs, integrated stereo speakers, and a three-year warranty. Super-clear, super-sharp, super-colorful. Color us impressed.



### ▶ Roxio Creator 2011 Pro

**\$109.99 • Sonic Solutions**

[www.sonic.com](http://www.sonic.com)

If only media creation were simple. But it's not, mainly because we want to do so much—create, edit, and store images; assemble impressive video presentations and soundtracks; remove unwanted noise from old recordings; and burn our creations to DVD and Blu-ray Disc. But you can do it all with one app. We were impressed with Roxio Creator 2011 Pro's sophisticated functionality and ease of use. And if you've been checking out the latest movies, you know that 3D is all the rage; well, Roxio Creator Pro 2011 lets you create 3D video and images—and even includes 3D glasses. With the Pro version, you can also burn your creations to Blu-ray Disc, copy and back up data, and more. It's a do-it-all media suite that impressed us and will impress you.

### SilverFast SE Plus

**\$84 to \$104 • LaserSoft Imaging**

[www.silverfast.com](http://www.silverfast.com)

LaserSoft's SilverFast SE Plus imaging suite uses clever preprocessing tools and techniques to clean up your images *before* the actual scan, ensuring that no image data is lost so that the results are the best they can be. In addition to the typical image-editing features, SilverFast SE Plus adds more sophisticated tools, including: Scan Pilot to guide you through scanning, Multi-Exposure to increase image density (and therefore the quality of the reproduction), and Selective Color Correction—which lets you adjust a specific color without affecting other colors. Anybody can scan an image, but if you're the demanding sort, consider SilverFast SE Plus for professional-level imaging tools that will help you get more out of your scanner.





# Stocking Stuffers

## High-Tech Gifts For A Cool Yule

**T**raditional stocking stuffers are small, inexpensive items worth giving to a loved one but not really worth wrapping as a separate gift. If you're thinking along technological lines when you're doing your holiday shopping, a stocking stuffer could be a gift card to Amazon.com or iTunes, a memory card, an LCD cleaning kit, CD/DVD jewel cases, and so on. There's nothing wrong with these low-priced

suggestions, but they're not that hard to think up. In fact, they're fairly obvious.

Hence, we've chunked out that rather restrictive definition of a stocking stuffer in favor of high-tech items that could conceivably fit into a stocking, in physical size if not in price. Granted, we ended up stretching even this generous redefinition with a few bulky treasures carrying triple-digit price tags. Because, well . . . 'tis the season.

BY MARTY SEMS

### iPhone 4 Beetle Case

**\$34.99 • AGF**

[www.agfindings.com](http://www.agfindings.com)

Soon after buying an iPhone, users start looking for a case to put it in. Not only can a good case protect a phone like this, but it can also personalize it. AGF knows that iPhone users have individual tastes when it comes to beautifying their investments. That's why the Beetle cases for the iPhone 4 come in a variety of colors. Black/blue, black/yellow, and lilac/magenta color schemes were available first, followed by red/white, blue/white, and hot pink/purple editions. You can find them at AT&T retail stores as well as online.



### ▶ eGo Blackbelt Portable Hard Drive For Macs

**\$219.99 (1TB) • Iomega**

[go.iomega.com](http://go.iomega.com)



Portable hard drives with 1TB (terabyte) of capacity aren't hard to find. What is hard to find is a unit with dual FireWire 800 ports, such as this Mac-centric eGo Blackbelt. It comes formatted with HFS+ (Hierarchical File System Plus) and ready to use. There's also a USB 2.0 port for more general compatibility with both Macs and PCs. "Ruggedizing" features such as Iomega's Power Grip band and Drop Guard Xtreme keep data safe, even if the drive were to fall up to 7 feet. Your loved one will be able to download Iomega Protection Suite Mac Edition software and enjoy the Blackbelt eGo's three-year limited warranty. Of course, eGos tailored to Windows systems are available, too.

## Holiday Gift Guide



### Computer Workspace Ornaments

**\$12.95 • Bytes 'n Grins**

[bit.ly/ctlXis](http://bit.ly/ctlXis)

The beauty of the Internet is that it allows you to visit small businesses as easily as big-name chain retailers, and you never know quite what you'll find. For example, this charming line of geeky ornaments is available from a Yahoo! store. Computer desk, mouse, keyboard, monitor . . . yup, that pretty much describes the work and play of a lot of people we know. You can order a Computer Workspace ornament with either a boy or a girl, and with a limited choice of hair and skin tones. Personalization with the name of your loved one is only a dollar more. At press time, these were on sale for \$8.95, so click on over.

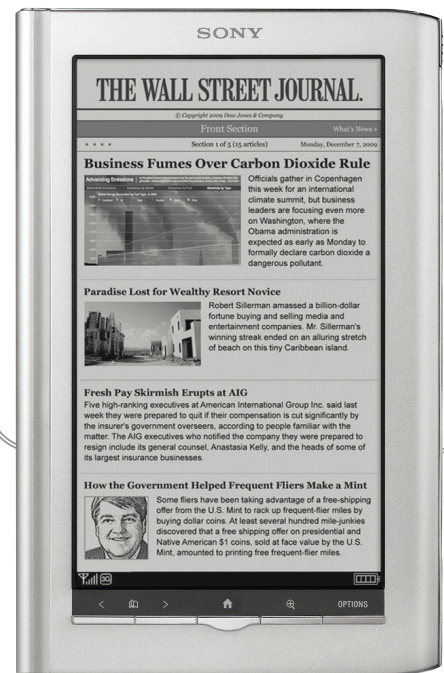


### Reader Daily Edition

**\$299.99 • Sony**

[www.sonymstyle.com](http://www.sonymstyle.com)

It seems that electronic books have finally come into their own, even outpacing sales of print editions in recent months. Perhaps good reader devices at reasonable prices are the reason. Sony's new Reader Daily Edition comes with a bigger touchscreen than its stablemates, measuring 7 inches corner to corner. It features the crisp text and readability in direct sunlight that users of the original Reader have come to love. There's Wi-Fi support built into the half-pound device, along with free access to Sony's Reader Store over a 3G connection. And despite being only 0.4 inches thin, there's room for 1,200 ebooks (up to 50,000 with a memory card) and a battery good for up to 22 days of reading on a single charge.

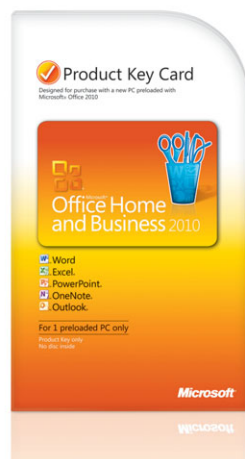


### ErgoMotion Laser Mouse

**\$49.95 • SmartFish**

[www.smartfishtechnologies.com](http://www.smartfishtechnologies.com)

Ergonomic devices are godsend for computer users with sore wrists, forearms, and shoulders. (We're not yet sure how the industry will help heavy mobile users suffering from "text thumb.") Here's a mouse that's designed to tilt on its base to accommodate the natural motions of the hand. The result, according to SmartFish, is less strain on body parts for a more comfortable computing or gaming experience. The ErgoMotion Laser Mouse is a wireless model with a USB base. The mouse is usable with Macs as well as PCs. It's also symmetrical, so it's suitable for both left- and right-handed users. And, being a laser mouse, it's highly responsive. Come to think of it, slip one of these into our stocking as well, won't you?



### Office 2010 Product Key Card

**\$119.99 to \$349.99 • Microsoft**

[www.microsoft.com](http://www.microsoft.com)

We've seen the rise of gift cards, phone cards, and even prepaid "credit" cards. Microsoft has expanded on the concept with its new PKCs, or product key cards, for Office 2010. If a friend or family member has recently bought a new PC, perhaps she has Office 2010 pre-loaded on her hard drive just waiting to be unlocked. A PKC gives her a product key to type into her computer, so she can activate Office and begin to use it. It's a new twist on an old sales technique, and it certainly saves a great deal of time spent installing large programs from CD or DVD.

## Holiday Gift Guide



### XXL 550 TM

\$259.95 • TomTom

[www.tomtom.com](http://www.tomtom.com)

A good GPS (global positioning system) device can show and tell a family member how to get from point A to point B, and it can do so with the latest map and traffic information. The TM is a TomTom XXL 550 with lifetime (of the device) traffic and map updates (four per year of the latter). In between major map releases, its Map Share feature lets you receive minor updates from other drivers with TomTom GPSES. The XXL 550 TM has a colorful, clear 5-inch touchscreen with a glare-free surface and a widescreen aspect ratio. On-screen Advanced Lane Guidance tells your loved one which lane to be in, while IQ Routes adjusts the unit's recommended route based on actual traffic speeds for the time of the day.

### ▼ Ferrari Wireless GT Cockpit 430 Scuderia Edition

\$249.99 • Thrustmaster  
[www.thrustmaster.com](http://www.thrustmaster.com)

Car games are kind of a letdown without a good wheel and pedal combo. You simply can't replicate the feel of driving with a game console controller or computer keyboard. Fortunately, there are third-party options such as this programmable setup from Thrustmaster. At 23 pounds, it's very stable on its wide base, even under heavy use. And yet it folds down quite compactly—even the wheel comes off—for discreet storage. The wireless system is usable from more than 30 feet away, and it can run for up to 50 hours on a set of four AA batteries. It's compatible with the Sony PlayStation 3 and PCs. Best of all, its wheel is precise and its pedals feel like the real thing.



### ▲ PLN3

\$89.95 • Plaster Networks  
[plasternetworks.com](http://plasternetworks.com)

Powerline equipment gives users an easy way to create a secure, speedy, wired network without having to string Ethernet cable around the house. The PLN3 is a rather unusual powerline adapter in that it features an advanced processor inside. It analyzes the electrical conditions of the user's home wiring. Next, it optimizes data throughput on the powerline network, which can make it possible to stream high-definition video from a PC to a device in the living room, among other things. The PLN3 can even work its magic on a network made up of powerline adapters from other companies. If the recipient needs to build a powerline network from scratch, consider giving the PLN3 bundled with an AV200 adapter for \$129.90, a \$25 savings.

### ▼ Power Pro X5

\$179.99 • GE  
[www.general-imaging.com](http://www.general-imaging.com)

Anyone learning about the science of photography beneath all the auto-magic voodoo would love a digital camera that can offer full manual as well as automatic control. A big 27mm lens, a high ISO setting of 3200, and 15X optical/5X digital zoom are similarly enticing features. This 14.1MP (megapixel)



cam also boasts a 2.7-inch display, optical image stabilization, and the ability to take panoramic pictures as the user holds down the shutter button. The X5 can shoot when the subjects smile, and it can alert the user if anyone blinked. And for you, the gift-giver, the unexpectedly low price is the icing on the cake. Word has it that the price will be \$149.99 closer to the holidays, so keep your eyes peeled.

## Holiday Gift Guide



### ◀ Wireless Car Headphones For Kids

**\$34.99 • Kidz Gear**

[www.gearforkidz.com](http://www.gearforkidz.com)

Back in our day, we didn't have DVD players in the back seat. . . But if we could've, we certainly would've. Not that travel games, reading, or just looking out the window have gone out of style, but parents today know that backseat video encourages filial harmony on long car trips. That is, unless the audio spills over into the front seat to annoy Mom and Dad. These wireless headphones can keep the peace. They're guaranteed to be compatible with the IR (infrared) systems in built-in car DVD players. Best of all, they're kid-sized, lightweight, and comfortable to wear, so there shouldn't be any arguments when it's time to put them on.

### My Secret Circle

**\$19.99 • Senario**

[mysecretcircle.com](http://mysecretcircle.com)

It can be difficult to shop for girls aged 8 to 12, especially if you're a little behind on their ever-changing interests. Here's a stocking stuffer that shouldn't go amiss with a miss. Based on a USB flash drive, My Secret Circle lets girls enjoy social networking with their friends in a secure, colorful, and fun way. After making an avatar, or on-screen representation of herself, a girl can journal her thoughts, play games, and send messages to her friends. She can also invite her friends to join her circle online to share photos, talk to each other over headsets, and more. Privacy and security are paramount in My Secret Circle, making it a safer alternative to mainstream social networking sites.



### ▶ Sensoglove

**\$89 • Sensoglove**

[www.sensoglove.com](http://www.sensoglove.com)

What good is technology if it can't help someone improve his golf game? Sensoglove is billed as the first golfing glove to give immediate feedback on how tightly the user grips his club. Golfers know that the best grip is neither too loose nor too tight, but until now, they didn't have any high-tech tools to help correct bad habits before they could start. Sensoglove is designed to tell the user which fingers are exerting too much tension, and thus decreasing the potential smoothness and power of a drive, putt, or chip shot. The top-shelf cabretta leather glove is especially useful for beginners, as it can help them develop the right "feel" for their clubs early on. However, any golfer can benefit from the Sensoglove's objective and real-time input.

# Settling In

by Gregory Anderson

**A** couple Saturday mornings ago, while everyone else was at music class, I headed for the Sprint store in Center City. I was looking to solve two problems at once. I needed to pick a new phone for myself and get help with a strange bug in my wife's new Palm Pre. She could text anyone in the world but me—her plan-mate. A leisurely newspaper and coffee later, after realizing I'd poorly researched the store's opening time, I was eventually able to bring my recent smartphone saga to a close.

Let's start with the strictly technical problem—our marital SMS (Short Message Service) silent treatment. I described our lessons learned from the Palm Pre last month, but after a few days, we realized that neither of our texts were getting through to each other. It took some time to convince my wife that this wasn't another case of high-tech “selective hearing.” After the standard restarts, troubleshooting, and online research, we had several theories but no answers and no concrete steps left to try. Several phone calls to tech support shed no additional light. We realized we had spent far more time over the phone explaining the problem, convincing them it was real, and retrying the same reboot steps than it would take to just show someone in person. Normally, I'm all about independent troubleshooting and remote tech support. It's what I do for a living. But they can only take you so far, and sometimes it's nice to have a physical location where they have to help you. I recommend blocking off plenty of time and girding up your patience. If you insist on sitting and waiting until your problem is solved, you're a lot more likely to get the attention you need. In the end, there was a problem with her number porting in from Verizon, and she required a firmware update. We'd have chased that for weeks on the Web or over the phone.

My patience at the store also had an ulterior motive. I needed to handle smartphone candidates in person and

make a decision on replacing my Treo. I didn't take long to narrow the options. The more I tried them, the less I liked the iPhone-like options. In fact, my appreciation for the Treo's keyboard setup, touchscreen, and size grew as I tried out other models. I decided I only wanted something that had both a keyboard and touchscreen and that wasn't any bigger than my Treo. Those conditions knocked out most of the HTC models and all of the cheaper keyboard-only phones. It came down to a Samsung Intercept and a Palm Pixi. In the end, the Pixi's poor battery life and lack of Wi-Fi sent me to the Intercept. It doesn't have everything I

want—I'm not in love with the slider keyboard on the side or the dearth of physical function buttons—but it does meet my primary criteria and the Android OS has some nice features.

In the end, what's important is not whether your mobile device (or any technology) is perfect but whether it meets your main priorities. You have to define your ideal and then make decisions about what you're willing to trade off and what you aren't. It's a shame they didn't put the new Palm webOS into an updated Treo body. I'd have been on it in a second. But that option was

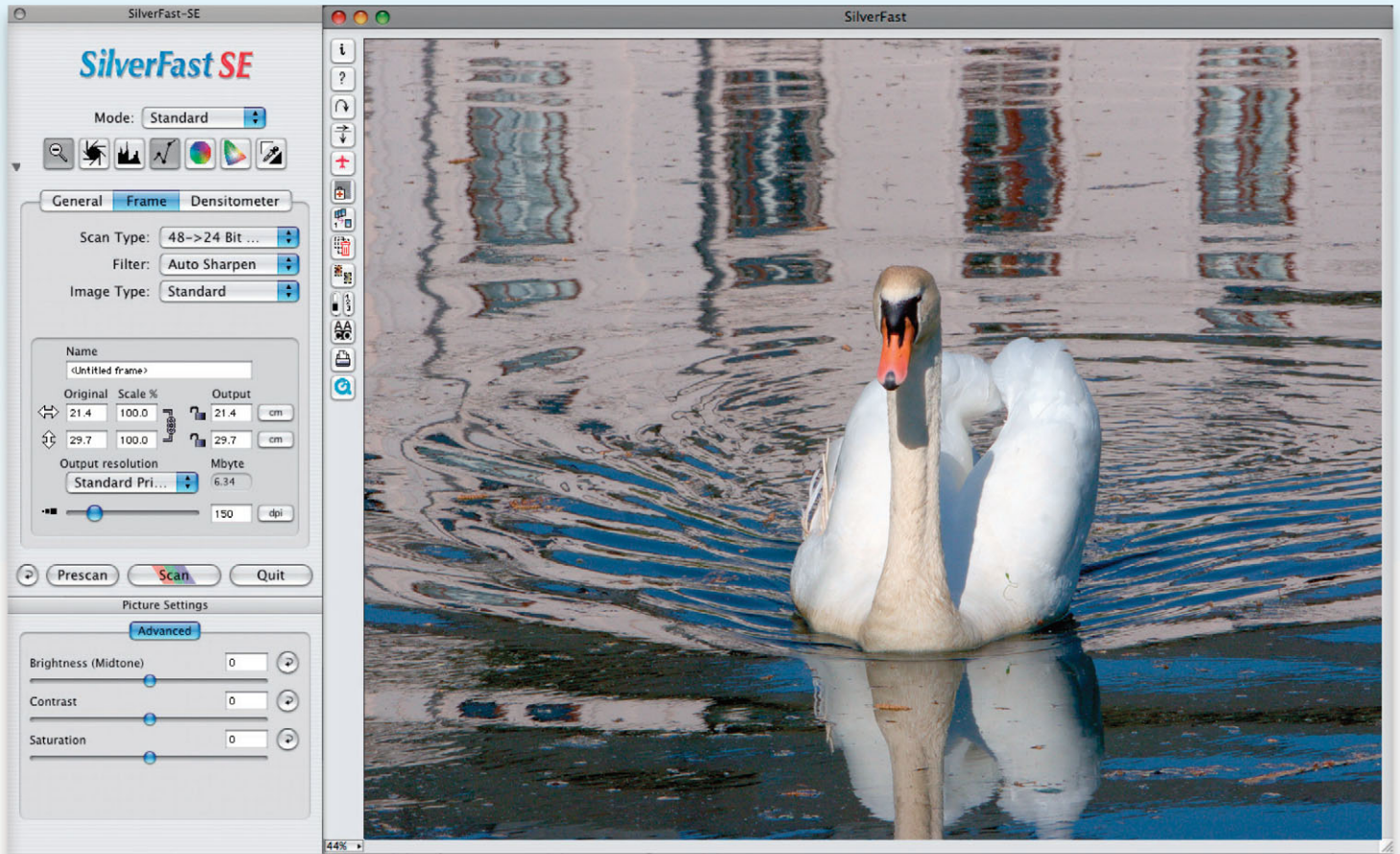
off the table. As a second choice, I probably would have gotten a Palm Pre except I knew from my wife's handset that its bottom-sliding keyboard sits just a little too close to the case for my thumbs. In the end, I might not be writing this column on a perfect device, but I am able to write it on a nice new smartphone with a keyboard that works, a screen large enough to read text clearly, and a bunch of cool new apps. I think I can live with that. ■



**Gregory Anderson** is a regular contributor to Smart Computing and several other technology publications. He keeps a sharp eye (with the help of thick glasses) on computing trends and enjoys working with geeks of all stripes—most of the time. Share your smartphone standing at [gregory-anderson@smartcomputing.com](mailto:gregory-anderson@smartcomputing.com).

# SilverFast® SE Plus

WORLDWIDE REGARDED AS THE PROFESSIONAL  
STANDARD FOR SCAN SOFTWARE



*„If you are still digitizing with the manufacturer's software, you will be amazed of the possibilities offered by SilverFast 6.6.“*

*Publishing Praxis 10/2008*

SilverFast SE Plus is specially designed for those who want to enter the world of digital image processing. Images will benefit immensely from SilverFast's intelligent automatic functions which help to make the editing process much easier. Predictable color from the SilverFast SE preview gives imaging and color reproduction a new dimension, securing the correct workflow with the ScanPilot. SilverFast SE Plus can be used as a standalone application or as a plug-in for Photoshop.

## Selected SilverFast® Features



### AutoAdjust

Select an appropriate image type preset and optimize your image automatically with a single mouseclick.



### Multi-Exposure

Scanning slides Multi-Exposure improves the Dynamic Range of most scanners, reduces noise and brings up more picture details.



### Preview Concept

Any correction is visible in the preview window in realtime.



### USM (Unsharp Masking)

The luminance-based calculation of brightness values ensures sharpness without effecting saturation or tone values of the image.



### QuickTime Movies

SilverFast tutorial movies are available directly from the program dialogs.

MORE REAL THAN YOUR IMAGINATION

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The 22" Fuhzion™ VX2268wm 120Hz 3D-Ready monitor is perfect for 3D gaming and crystal clear video experiences. With double the refresh rate of a regular LCD panel, a native 1680x1050 resolution, and a 3ms response time, your 3D experience will be better than ever! The VX2268wm is also equipped with high-quality hidden stereo speakers and SRS® WOW HD audio software that delivers a surround sound experience.

Gaming / Education / Business / Military / Design / Engineering / Architecture

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